Mamadou Sakho + Katarina Johnson-Thompson + Joao Teixeira + Asisat Oshoala + Didi Hamann + Neil Mellor

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LIVERPOOL'S YOUNG ACES
12-page Academy special report

SKRTEL & MIGNOLET
Exclusive interviews

LANCASHIRE REDMEN
Our cricketing Kopites

THE GERRARD COLLECTION
New at the club museum

JORDON IBE KEEPING UP THE GOOD WORK









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GOOOAAAL!

Philippe Coutinho celebrates his first senior goal for Brazil in an international friendly against Mexico, a pre-Copa America encounter in Sao Paolo. The Reds midfield ace finished from a tight angle after beating a defender then surprising the keeper who was expecting a cross. Also on target was Liverpool Ladies star Asisat Oshoala, scoring her own stunning goal for her country Nigeria in a 3-3 draw with Sweden at the Women's World Cup finals in Canada. Asisat had recently been crowned BBC Women's Footballer of the Year 2015.




CBF
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1 JUST THE TICKET

Liverpool FC has frozen prices of general admission matchday tickets for the 2015/16 Barclays Premier League season. A 10 per cent reduction for junior season-tickets and a price-freeze on all adult season-tickets for the upcoming campaign had already been announced.

The club has been liaising with a ticketing working group made up of the Official Supporters Committee, Spion Kop 1906 and Spirit Of Shankly. Chief executive Ian Ayre say: "We have worked in collaboration as we look at practical initiatives to increase accessibility and affordability of tickets at Anfield." Bob Humphries, chair of the LFC Supporters' Committee and member of the working group, adds: "We are pleased that the football club has listened to our concerns about ticket prices and have, at least in the short term, agreed to change their proposals and freeze prices to allow us time to work with them to find solutions. In the coming months we will be meeting to discuss pricing in the new stadium and making it more affordable and accessible for current supporters and future generations of young supporters."





2 SIX IS THE NEW 12

Calling all football transfer-deadine insomniacs: there will be no midnight rush on last-minute deals this September as the closure of the window has been brought forward to 6pm on the final day of activity.

The summer business in England will end on Tuesday 1 September and the Premier League has since informed all 20 clubs that the deadline has been changed to a tea-time finish. This development has been prompted by UEFA's directive to clubs that the deadline for submitting Champions League squads for season 2015/16 is midnight on the same day. The Premier League acted to give participating clubs Chelsea, Manchester City, Arsenal and Manchester United extra hours to register new players bought on the final day and then forward the list of the European squads to UEFA.



POINTS CLEAR

England ace signs in; new transfer-deadline date; price-freeze on tickets

3 JAMES THE FIRST

England international James Milner became Liverpool FC's first signing of the summer, moving on a free transfer from Manchester City subject to a medical. The club agreed personal terms with the 29-year-old midfielder, who moves upon the end of his contract with City.

James arrives at Anfield having won two Premier League titles, an FA Cup and a League Cup during his five-year spell with City. The 29-year-old has also earned over 50 England caps. He has lined up against Liverpool 24 times during the course of his career so far in the colours of Leeds United, Newcastle United, Aston Villa and City.

Also new in red are former Bolton keeper Adam Bogdan and ex-Burnley striker Danny Ings. The latter, aged 22, struck 11 goals in 35 Premier League appearances for the Clarets last season, which was his first in the top flight. Danny had found the target 21 times in the previous campaign to help Burnley secure promotion from the Championship. The England Under-21 forward faced the Reds twice in 2014/15, featuring for 90 minutes at Anfield in March.



LIVER VISION





POOL

Summer is here, but long-serving defender and adopted Liverpudlian Martin Skrtel is already plotting a Reds resurgence next season, he tells John Hynes

After 48 club appearances during the 2014/15 campaign, taking in a variety of locations from Burnley to the Santiago Bernabeu, defender Martin Skrtel wants to forget about the game for a few weeks this summer. The Slovakian describes this as "trying to get football out of my head."

In an attempt to do that, he will spend some time holidaying in Croatia before going back home to see family and friends in Slovakia. "Seasons are busy and intense," he points out. "So when it all comes to an end you need a break. You can afford to not think about being a footballer for a little bit.

"People believe footballers have lots of time off, but like everyone else it would be good to have more time off. Everyone probably thinks that, no matter what their job."

Only after he has enjoyed some down-time with those closest to him will Skrtel begin to think about goings-on at Anfield again. "I will try to keep an eye on what is happening and which players are coming in. Fans get excited about transfers. For players it's slightly different. It's something you can't control; all you can do is hope that there are additions that can make the squad and first team stronger. It's up to the manager and others, they look after that.

"If you ask me, I think we need a few guys who can come straight in and do well. I think Stevie [Gerrard] said something similar. If you want to compete with teams in the top four then you need big players."

Missing out on one of the Champions League places was obviously a huge disappointment for Martin and his colleagues. Finishing sixth and reaching the semi-final in both domestic cups might be considered a decent effort at some clubs. Liverpool is different.

"Our target was to get in the top four and win something," Skrtel admits. "We couldn't achieve either of those. Two semi-finals and sixth isn't bad but we know it could be better, especially after finishing second the previous season.

"That is football. You have ups and downs. This season has been a 'down' and we need to make sure that we improve in the future."

Catching up with or surpassing the sides that finished above the Reds is quite a challenge. But Skrtel believes the gap between Liverpool and Chelsea, Manchester City, Arsenal and Manchester United isn't as vast as some have made out.


Staying ahead of the pack

"We know last season could've been a lot better and we must improve"


WARRIOR


"The best way to play better on the pitch is to work hard in training"
L.F.C.
BARCLAYS
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"I don't think they are that much better. For example, we played Chelsea four times and each game was close. In some of those, particularly the League Cup semis, we were probably a little unlucky not to win each time.

"So against them we did okay. The big difference though is consistency. Chelsea have been the most consistent side. Even when they haven't played at their best, they've still managed to win and that's why they are deserved champions."

While Skrtel accepts football will always contain highs and lows, he is quick to point out that defeats, or not achieving success, upset him. "When you lose or have a bad season it's an awful feeling. You are sad and disappointed and you don't really want to speak to anyone. I don't kick a wall or shout [after a defeat] but it stays with you for a long time.

"I always try to look at why we lost or why I didn't perform well. I think you have to do that because you need to see why something happened – and I know the only place you can change it is out on the training field so you have to work hard there to improve."

That – striving to be better – is something Skrtel has been doing since he started out back in his homeland with youth side FC Previdza and then FC Trencin. After impressing with the latter he knew that to progress there was only one option: to move to a bigger and better league. "I'd played probably 65 or 70 games in the Slovakian league, so I needed to go to the next level and that was Russia with Zenit St Petersburg. I think it can be good for a young player to move to a better league as it helps them to improve.

"Going to Russia wasn't easy for me at first. I went from a place with a population of around 50,000 to a city of five million people. I was without my family and didn't know the language. I had to adapt because I knew it would be good for my career in the long term. It was the right decision because it prepared me to come to Liverpool. If I had gone straight from Slovakia to England it would have been much more difficult.

"It [joining Zenit] feels like yesterday, to be honest. I can still remember it clearly but it was a long time ago. Time flies. I was 19 then. Now I'm 30 and will be 31 in December."

"I can still remember joining Zenit 11 years ago – it feels like yesterday"



Staying focused

The fact that he is one of the more senior members of Brendan Rodgers' squad was reinforced during a behind-closed-doors game at Melwood back in April. "A lot of the lads from the Academy were involved, they are just 17 or 18. That made me feel old. Stevie and I were almost like grandads compared to them! But you can't stop time. The reality is more and more young players will come into the squad. It's up to me to do my best to stay fit and be ready."

The progress of our young players – particularly the centre-backs – has not gone unnoticed by Skrtel. "I pay attention to defenders in my position, guys like Lloyd Jones or Dan Cleary. They are nice guys and you can see they already know a lot about the game. But the next step is very difficult for centre-backs at a big club.

"The gap from Academy football to the first team is huge. The speed of the game is much faster, there is more aggression, and you are up against some of the best players in the world. Being ready for that takes time.

"Managers in the Premier League usually want experienced players in those [centre-back] roles because the opposition is tough. So the young lads might have to get their experience by going on loan in League One or the Championship. Playing games at that level would really help them. They can then come back and be really ready to challenge for a place in the first team here."

Aged 19 with Zenit in 2004

The departure of Gerrard is something all supporters are still coming to terms with. Seeing someone else wear the no8 shirt will be strange. For the players, the absence of their long-serving skipper will probably take even longer to fully comprehend.

Martin confirms as much when he says: "Liverpool will never be the same





Sharing a joke in training

without Stevie. Before I came to this club, if someone mentioned Liverpool FC I immediately thought of Stevie and it's been the same since I joined. I've spent seven-and-a-half years working alongside him every day and he's become a friend.

"It is always difficult to replace somebody like him on the pitch and around the training ground – he was the heart and soul of the team. With him gone, other experienced players like me have to step up. In fact we all have to step up, everyone in the squad. That is the key for next season.

"Of course we will all miss Stevie but we have to respect his decision and wish him all the best for a new stage of his career. It will be great for him and his family."

Talk of his long-time colleague departing for LA Galaxy leads to enquiring if Skrtel would ever contemplate such a switch to the USA at some point in the distant future? "Maybe one day I might like to do something similar. Right now I am here and I love this club, the city and the people. So I want to stay here for as long as possible and intend to play at this level for as long as possible.

"When I think about the future and what I might do after playing, I have

"Right now I am here and I love this club, the city and the people"

no idea. My whole life has been involved in this game and I can't imagine not being in football. Whether I become a coach or a manager or something else I don't know. Maybe a director of football-type job might be more straightforward."

For now, though, these few weeks of the summer will hopefully involve thinking about anything but football – although that is much easier said than done when a little boy who is obsessed with it is on the scene.

Skrtel's son Matteo [not named after Liverpool's former central defender Dominic] is four years old. "He loves kicking a football around and really enjoys going to Anfield to watch us play. We spend hours kicking a ball around in the park. That family-time is great. It helps me to get football out of my head, kind of."

Skrtel on Emre Can



"I think it is very difficult to play in different positions the way Emre does. In one of our training sessions during the last week of the season I was upfront for a few minutes and it's so tough to switch roles. So that shows you how good Emre is because he can play at the back or in midfield and do really well. He has a lot of quality, especially when you consider how young he still is."


Garuda Indonesia


"I had trials with Everton but they wanted me to go in goal"

KOP KAT

How the summer is shaping up for LFC fan and heptathlete Katarina Johnson-Thompson



Heptathlete Katarina Johnson-Thompson's rise to the top will have come as little surprise to those who saw her win gold at the World Youth Championships in 2009.

Now the 22-year-old is the current world no1 after taking European indoor gold in March, and she's targeting a first World Athletics Championships medal in Beijing in August this year.

A keen Red, she also tries to get to Anfield whenever her busy schedule allows, and had her career path taken a different route she could have been playing football for – or against – Liverpool Ladies.

"As soon as I could play football, I did and I used to be in my football kit all the time," she says. "My grandad Jimmy was a big Reds fan and that was obviously passed down to me.

"It's hard to get to Anfield regularly but I keep tabs on the scores"

"I had trials with a few teams when I was younger – including Everton! But they wanted me to go in goal and I wanted to be a defender or a midfielder. I really didn't want to go in goal so I went to athletics instead. My mum said I needed a hobby so I went to keyboard lessons then to athletics."

Katarina, from Halewood in south Liverpool, can often be found putting herself through her paces in training at the city's Wavertree Sports Park. Elements of the media have tried to crank up a rivalry with Jessica Ennis-Hill, but the pair are good friends and spur each other on to new heights, lengths and times.

Katarina was 15th in the heptahlon at the 2012 Olympics in London as she joined gold medallist Ennis and Louise Hazel (27th) in representing the UK in the multi-discipline event. As well as being the current British record-holder for the high jump she has the indoor record for the long jump too. When she isn't focused on achieving athletic excellence, she keeps tuned in to events affecting Liverpool FC.

"Going to Anfield is always special. It is difficult to get along regularly but I keep tabs on the scores and catch highlights whenever I can."

Katarina vividly remembers her first home game – against Middlesbrough in April 2005, less than a month before the Reds' fifth European Cup triumph. "I went with my cousin and I was sat in the Main Stand. It was the game when Steven Gerrard scored an absolute screamer [past Brad Jones]. It's funny because everyone always remembers that goal and that was my first match.

"I was 12 in 2005 but I remember the Champions League final quite clearly. I watched it with my grandad and every time that Milan scored I was getting further and further into the couch. At half-time I just got ready for bed. Then I had a shout that we had scored and it was just brilliant. I remember there was a street party outside my house!

"I was there for the homecoming parade as well, when it went over the flyover. That was a great memory."

So far this year Katarina has set three British indoor records – for long jump, high jump and overall pentathlon points total. She has her sights set on a medal in China. "I feel ready now as an athlete to take on these challenges," she tells BBC Sport.

"I'll be disappointed if I don't come away with a medal. In the heptathlon you have to concentrate on yourself. I've got seven events and I have to make sure I'm the best prepared for each – that's all you can do."

Katarina at Anfield



KJT's roll of honour

2015 European Indoor Championships pentathlon gold
2014 World Indoor Championships long jump silver
2013 World Championships heptathlon 5th
2012 Olympic Games heptathlon 15th
2012 World Junior Games long jump gold
2009 World Youth Championships heptathlon gold

The two-day heptathlon consists of seven disciplines: the 100 metres hurdles, high jump, shot put, 200 metres, long jump, javelin and 800 metres. The first four events are contested on day one and the remaining three on day two. Points are awarded for the athlete's performance in each event.

Caroline the Kopite!

Reds on tour

This summer's big tennis and golf tournaments will feature some famous Liverpool fans

A sure sign that the sporting summer has arrived is the eyes of the world focused on southwest London for a fortnight as the Wimbledon tennis championships takes place.

Three years ago Liverpool fan Jonny Marray's triumph in the male doubles ensured him a place in history as a rare British winner at the famous venue. Fazakerley-born Marry enjoyed that success alongside Dane Freddie Nielson, also a supporter of LFC.

Despite their major triumph, the duo no longer competes together. Jonny played alongside Colin Fleming at the recent French Open, exiting on day three against Feliciano Lopez and Max Mirnyi. When the grass tournament begins on Monday 29 June Marray will be hoping for better fortune and to emulate his feat of 2012.

Wozniacki watched Steven Gerrard's last game wearing a red shirt

In the Ladies section of the competition there is also an Liverpool FC link, through Danish player and former world no1 Caroline Wozniacki. The 24-year-old's affection for the club is well-known. She even donned a Liverpool shirt on court during a warm up in 2011, and back in May, she Tweeted: 'Proudly wearing my Stevie G jersey watching his last game at Anfield! #ThanksStevie #legend'.

Just a few days after Wimbledon concludes another annual spectacle involving world-class players will begin; the British Open. This year it takes place at St Andrews in Scotland, one of golf's most awe-inspiring venues. Again, a Liverpool-supporting presence will be competing for the silverware.

The last Reds fan to lift the claret jug was Ulsterman Darren Clarke in 2011. Aged 42 at the time, the son of an Everton-supporting father registered a three-shot victory over both Dustin Johnson and Phil Mickelson. Joining Clarke among this year's field is another Red in the form of Welshman Jamie Donaldson. The 39-year-old from Pontypridd is currently ranked at no29 in the world and was part of the European team which retained the Ryder Cup against USA in 2014.



Reds fan Darren with United follower Rory!



YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE
LIVERPOOL
FOOTBALL CLUB
EST 1892
Official
Membership

Three Liverpo
Old Trafford?



TOM SMITH, 29, succeeded Chapple as captain and has been a regular in thes side since 2005. He's scored over 3,200 first-class runs and taken more than 200 wickets.

GLEN CHAPPLE, 41, stood down as captain last summer to take on a player-coach role. He took more than 900 first-class wickets and represented England in one-day cricket.

ol fans from Howzat?

Lancashire County Cricket Club has become a bastion of LFC support. Glenn Price dons his pads and gloves to find out more…



ASHWELL PRINCE, 38, played 66 Test matches for South Africa, averaging 41.64 runs per innings. Last month he scored 230 as Lancashire defeated Derbyshire.

They may be based a stone's throw away from LFC's greatest rivals, but Lancashire County Cricket Club have plenty of connections with the city of Liverpool – not least three LFC fans in middle-order batsman and former South African international Ashwell Prince, all-rounder and newly-appointed captain Tom Smith, and first-team coach and former fast bowler Glen Chapple…

All three of you are Liverpool fans from different backgrounds – how did that come about?

TOM SMITH: Because of my mum. My grandad is a Blue so it's probably to get back at him!

GLEN CHAPPLE: It was from Kenny Dalglish's era really and that great team in the 1980s. Most of my school friends were either United or Liverpool fans, but I supported Burnley as well because it was the closest club to where I lived. But Liverpool in Europe and winning the First Division, as it was then, was brilliant as well as the iconic players they had. It's my club for life.

ASHWELL PRINCE: It came about from a young age. I enjoy football and red has always been my colour. I was inspired by people like John Barnes and that's how I started supporting Liverpool. There are a lot of supporters of different clubs in our dressing-room and we have a good go at each other in there! But when you're out there representing the 'Red Rose' [Lancashire's emblem] we all have to pull together.

The cricket campaign starts at the business-end of the football season – that must be frustrating?

AP: It's tough. When you're working it's harder to get to the matches. I was fortunate enough to go to the Liverpool-Man City home game last year and was also at the Man United home game early in that season when we won 1-0 thanks to a goal from Daniel Sturridge. This last season [2014/15] I've been to a few.

GC: I suppose if Liverpool were going for the Premier League and I had to miss it because we were playing, then I'd be a bit frustrated. I've probably missed many over the years but you've got to keep focused on your job when the big games come around.

TS: That's part of what being a cricketer is about. It was especially tough in the 2013/14 season when we had to miss the important games towards the end of the year.

Have you ever sneaked off during a drinks break to check the score?

AP: (Laughing) All the time!

GC: (Smirking) It's something we've got to keep our professionalism about. We've got televisions in our dressing-room and it's okay to keep abreast of some of the information.

TS: I've never sneaked off but I always ask someone. It's always nice to know.

How often do you get to Anfield to watch the Reds?

AP: Every time we don't have a match, I go. If there's a game on, I'll try to be there.

GC: I've not been anywhere near as much as I'd have liked to. I used to before more commitments came along. It's something I might try to take my kids to in the next couple of years.

TS: As much as possible. I went to the derby this year with Paul Horton [another Red in the Lancs team] and I made the error of wearing blue! But yeah, as much as I can around cricket.

"I was inspired by John Barnes to become a Liverpool supporter"



Would you rather be a footballer or a cricketer?

AP: It's a tough one. I believe you are a product of your own environment. As a kid I enjoyed football but there weren't that many opportunities in South Africa for football. So maybe if I had grown up in a different environment I would have preferred to play football over cricket. All the guys who know me understand I'm very passionate about football and it gets quite heated in the dressing-room, especially when it's about Man United and Liverpool!

TS: Cricketer.

GC: It's never been a close decision! I wasn't anywhere near good enough to be a footballer. Football is obviously an exciting living but cricket was always my sport.

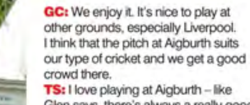
You take on Nottinghamshire in a one-day match at Aigburth [south Liverpool] in August – do you enjoy playing there?

AP: I really enjoy playing there. I've had a few good scores for Lancashire at Aigburth and I'm looking forward to it. It's a pity that we don't have a four-day game there this year. In the past we've had some good results there and it's usually a good wicket.

"It can get heated in the dressing-room with the United fans!"



Lancashire's crest

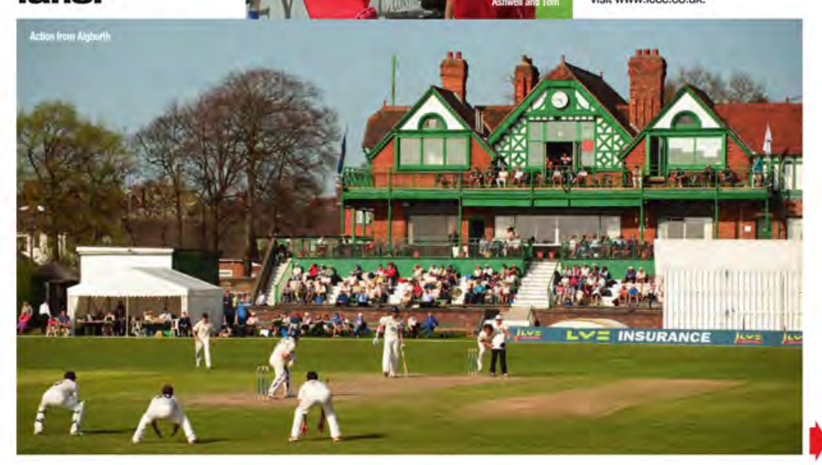


Ashwell and Tom

GC: We enjoy it. It's nice to play at other grounds, especially Liverpool. I think that the pitch at Aigburth suits our type of cricket and we get a good crowd there.

TS: I love playing at Aigburth – like Glen says, there's always a really good crowd there. It's a bit weird having a team from Manchester being so welcomed by Liverpudlians when we play there, but it's a great place to play cricket.

Lancashire County Cricket Club play Nottinghamshire Outlaws in the Royal London One-Day Cup at Aigburth on Tuesday 4 August (10.30am start). For tickets, please visit www.lccc.co.uk.



Action from Aigburth


Gordon Hodgson


Shane Warne saw the Reds at Cardiff

REDS IN WHITES

A look at Liverpool Football Club's many cricketing connections

The first link between LFC and the summer sport came in 1895, three years after the football club's formation, when goalkeeper Harry Storer played six games for Derbyshire. Then came Jimmy Jackson, who played in every outfield position for the Reds between 1925-33 and also skippered the side – he was the cousin of Australian Test batsman Archie Jackson.

Phil Taylor, who managed Liverpool in the late 1950s, made one County Championship appearance for Gloucestershire in 1938, two years after joining the Reds from Bristol Rovers as a wing-half. Post-war centre-forward Cyril Done played cricket for Bootle.

Liverpool FC's greatest all-rounder has to be Gordon Hodgson. Born in South Africa to English parents, he fired a club-record 17 hat-tricks for the Reds in the 1920s and 30s and amassed 232 league goals, eventually winning three international caps for his adopted country. But he regularly played at Old Trafford during his Liverpool career as a fast bowler for Lancashire, who spotted him taking wickets for Orrell in 1928.


An LFC cricketing XI with Bob Paisley (front row far left) play a benefit match at Wavertree in summer 1948

That same year he made his debut for the Red Rose county when Essex visited Aigburth, and overall his first-class career consisted of 56 matches and 146 wickets at a commendable average of 27.75, with a best performance of 6 for 77. In 1929, while playing for a Liverpool FC XI, he took all 10 wickets for only 13 runs in just seven overs to bowl out a Liverpool Police side!

Hodgson once declared: "There is nothing like cricket to give a man the right instinct for all outdoor ball-games. On the football field the cricketer's eye sees what is happening to the ball just that second or two sooner than the eye of a man who is not so versatile in



his sporting pursuits. 'Keep your eye on the ball' is the slogan when you are taking a kick, and this slogan should apply to every man on the field, no matter what he is doing."

In more recent times understudy Reds keeper Steve Ogrizovic proved he was no mean contributor on the Merseyside cricket scene: he played for Southport in 1982 shortly before moving to Coventry City. 'Oggy' also represented Shropshire at Minor Counties level, playing in the NatWest Trophy and the Benson and Hedges Cup. In those games he took the


Oggy at the crease

wickets of Test players Chris Broad, Martyn Moxon and Alvin Kallicharan.

Liverpool FC's lure extends to the Caribbean with West Indian legends Viv Richards and Curtly Ambrose keen followers of the team's fortunes. In his 1990 autobiography 'King Viv' recalled the time he went to Anfield to watch the Reds entertain Manchester United: "I'd never heard so much noise in my life. I'd never seen such sporting passion displayed so openly and fiercely… I was a Liverpool supporter on that day and I remain a devoted follower." Ambrose professed his love for LFC on a recent episode of BT Sport's *Clare Balding Show*, attempting to persuade fellow guest and Spurs striker Harry Kane to join the Reds!

Two other modern greats have seen Liverpool in action. Aussie bowling legend Shane Warne was guest of honour at the 2006 FA Cup final when the Reds defeated West Ham, while former South Africa captain Graeme Smith was at Anfield for the thrilling Premier League win over Manchester City in April 2014.

When Lancashire ended their 77-year wait for the County Championship in 2011 it was another Liverpool fan, Paul Horton, who contributed most runs to the cause (1,040). He grew up supporting the Reds from Down Under. "Both my parents are Scousers, as are my grandparents. My dad is from Knotty Ash and my mum's from Page Moss. They emigrated to Australia and I was born



South Africa's Graeme Smith at Anfield

in Sydney, but they moved back when I was 15. My dad is a big Liverpool fan so I was brought up as one, too. Every time I came over here on holiday I tried to get to games." Paul attended St Margaret's High School in Aigburth, just down the road from where he's now played many games for Lancs.

Bringing things right up-to-date, England all-rounder Moeen Ali is a lifelong Reds fan who's been named as an honorary ambassador for Pak Reds – Liverpool FC's official supporters club in Pakistan. His England team-mate Gary Ballance is another keen fan.


England all-rounder Moeen Ali works with LFC's fan club in Pakistan

Retirement is never easy, but there is life beyond playing football

Didi HAMANN



Players always hope to score goals, join the top clubs and win the biggest prizes. But no matter how talented you are, there is only one certainty in football. That is: you will have to stop playing and retire at some point.

I was reminded of this when we had a ten-year reunion for Istanbul back in May. It feels like only yesterday that we won the European Cup, so it was great to see everyone again and the lads all seemed very happy in what they are doing now. Unfortunately I know that is not the case for every player who stops playing. Some can be completely lost when that day comes.

As a footballer you tend to live for the moment. It's always about the next game and not a lot else. We don't think about it too much and then, all of a sudden, the last day of the season is upon us and our playing days are over.

For me, it wasn't a problem. I didn't find retiring difficult. I'd never been the keenest trainer, and that applied even more as I got older. In the end training was hard work so I felt the time was right to bow out. I probably could have played for another year and earned some more money but I didn't believe that would be right.

I don't miss playing at all. I was blessed to have been involved with some great teams, work alongside some world-class individuals and win a few trophies. I wouldn't change any of it. Even if you offered me the chance to go back to the age of 25 now and do it all again I wouldn't take it because I don't think my career could have been any more enjoyable.

Others can't accept the end. They want to go on forever. They know that buzz of playing can never be replicated. But retiring is a decision you have to make with your head. If we all went with our heart we'd carry on playing until our fifties or sixties. Most people only have to deal with the retirement scenario later in life, whereas it comes around a lot earlier for footballers.

"You retire with your head – go with your heart and you'd play till 50!"



Stevie still has plenty left before he retires

I think part of the reason I found the transition from player to ex-player straightforward was because I've always had other interests. Football can be all-consuming. You turn on the television or go on the Internet and it's constantly there, so you need to have ways of escaping it. That might be a round of golf. For me it was following cricket.

If you don't have those other interests you go from a routine of training or playing every day to having nothing to do except sit around twiddling your thumbs when you retire. That is no good for anybody. It can have a detrimental effect on everybody around you and is probably a reason why some players get in bother after they stop playing. For some people, a move into coaching is natural. For others, like Carra, it's the media. Whatever it is, you have to be sure about that change.

I'll see ex-players now and we never ask each other if we are enjoying retirement. Then you read interviews with them and you'll see some clearly aren't. Maybe it's why former players spend so much time on Twitter. They can use it to interact with the fans and still feel part of the game. But, as enjoyable as Twitter is – and I use it a lot – you need to have more going on. You need to challenge yourself. That's how you figure out there is an enjoyable life beyond playing.

Follow Didi on Twitter @DietmarHamann



KEEPING IT CLEAN

Simon Mignolet talks shut-outs, summer internationals and cricket with William Hughes

Simon Mignolet missed out on a share of the 2014/15 Golden Gloves award – by 16 minutes! The Belgian keeper's final tally of 13 shutouts was one behind the number posted by Manchester City and England ace Joe Hart.

However, Mignolet did play a part in 14 Liverpool clean-sheets. He came on as a 16th minute substitute for the injured Brad Jones in the 1-0 win at Burnley on Boxing Day, but the criteria for the award dealt only in full appearances.

"We would have been joint-first if we had the clean-sheet we got together with Brad against Burnley," he said. "That is a bit unfortunate and it would've been nice to have kept the most clean-sheets together with the team. Hopefully we can keep more next season."

Mignolet also kept a couple of shut-outs against Blackburn Rovers in the Reds' FA Cup quarter-final ties, saving from opposing keeper Simon Eastwood deep into added time of the replayed sixth-round clash at Ewood Park.

"As a youngster I played outfield as well as between the posts"

"Thankfully I managed to keep that one out! I have been forward for corners a few times myself in the course of my career but never come close to scoring."

He did however sample the feeling of netting a goal in front of the Kop when he slotted home Liverpool's 11th penalty in their epic Capital One Cup shoot-out against Middlesbrough back in September. It wasn't the first time the 27-year-old has put his name on the scoresheet either.

"It was good to score that one and I also scored a penalty while I was playing in Belgium for Sint-Truiden. We were leading 4-1 and it was the last minute of the game when we were awarded the penalty.

"Our captain asked me to come up and take it because the supporters were actually asking for it! It was a good moment. Did I go the same way as against Middlesbrough? I won't say in case I have the opportunity to score another in the future!"

Simon actually came to goalkeeping relatively late, first pulling on the gloves as a 15-year-old. "That is quite old when you compare it to most



Guarding the goal
versus Sunderland

goalkeepers but I think at that age you can still switch positions – not only as a keeper – because you are still able to learn the basics in a short space of time.

"To be fair, although I became a keeper at 15 I had also done some goalkeeping sessions from the age of 13. In certain ways it helps having been an outfield player, albeit in youth football because it certainly helps if you are closed down in a tight area.

"Of course the style of play here at Liverpool is to build up from the back. The difference between being a goalkeeper and an outfield player is that the outfield player can usually play forwards, backwards or sideways, whereas being a goalkeeper you can only play forwards.

"You have to accept and learn that the options are a lot more limited the moment you start playing in goal."

Belgium's Euro 2016 qualifier against Wales in Cardiff on 12 June meant Mignolet was set to have just a couple of weeks rest before returning to pre-season training. While the sporting headlines in early July will no doubt be consumed by the start of the Ashes, he reveals an interest in cricket which

"I once scored a penalty for a Belgian team in the last minute of play"





"I relate to wicket keepers – you have to be ready for that one ball"

is perhaps a little surprising given his Belgian background.

"I didn't even know about cricket until I arrived in England," he explains. "My goalie coach at Sunderland had to explain the rules to me and how it worked. In Belgium we understand baseball but cricket is not very well known! I found it interesting when I saw it on the telly when I first arrived from Belgium, but I didn't have a clue what was going on!

"The goalie coach explained to me what was happening and then I learned about the Ashes and the World Cup and so on.

"Now I get into it and it's a good game. Whenever family come over from Belgium and they see me watching it on the telly, I have to explain the rules to them. I still think they are a bit baffled!"

Another link is provided by Mignolet's commercial agent Luke Sutton, the former Derbyshire and Lancashire wicket-keeper. "I speak to him quite a lot. I guess wicket-keeping and goalkeeping have similar sorts of characteristics and I think mentally it works in a similar way too.

"As a wicket-keeper you are not really worked hard but you always have to be ready and concentrated for when that one ball comes along, so we can very much relate in that sense."

Safe hands v Hull City

Golden gloves 2014/15: the top five



JOE HART
Manchester City
36 Apps 14 Clean sheets



SIMON MIGNOLET
Liverpool
36 Apps 13 Clean sheets



FRASER FORSTER
Southampton
30 Apps 13 Clean sheets



LUKASZ FABIANSKI
Swansea City
37 Apps 13 Clean sheets



THIBAUT COURTOIS
Chelsea
32 Apps 12 Clean sheets

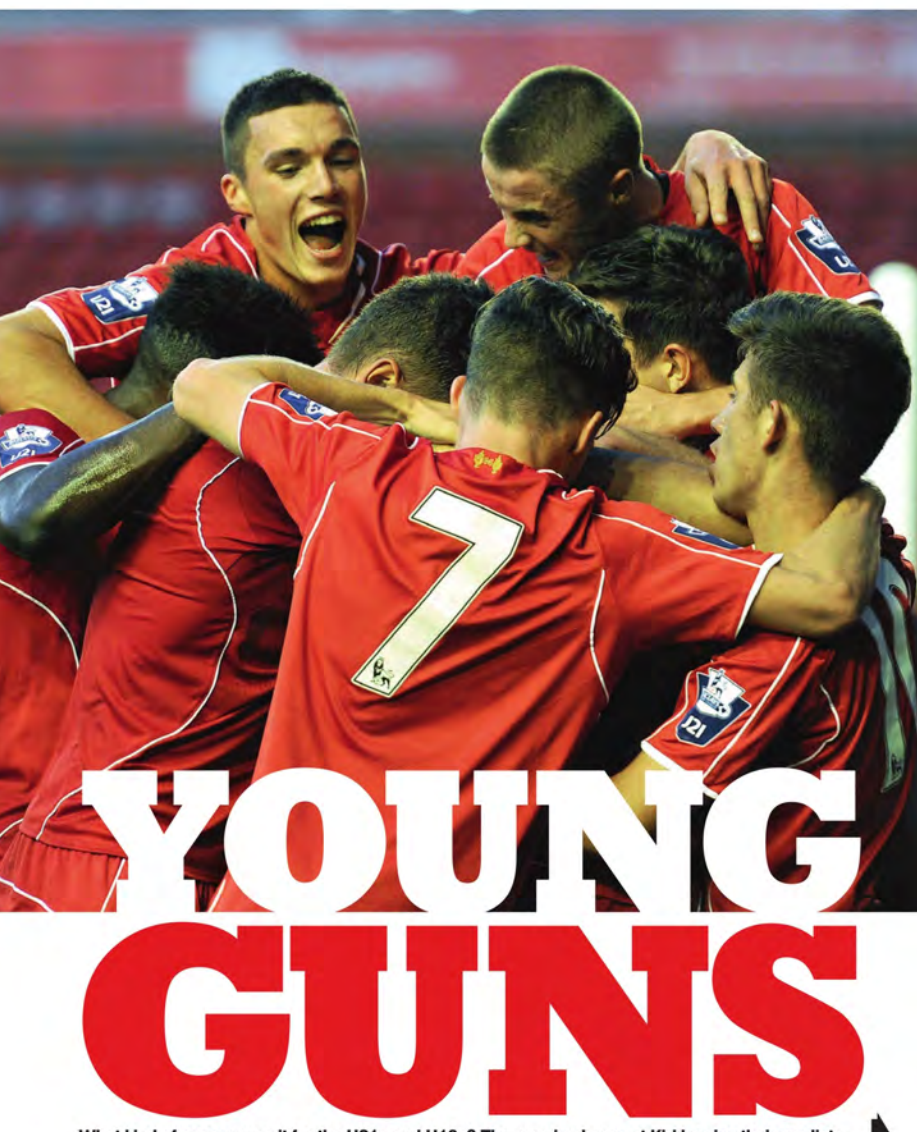




The courses offer a range of technical sessions and skills challenges with LFC Academy coaches.

All players will receive an LFC gift, training ball and certificate signed by Ian Rush.

liverpoolfc.com/soccerschools



YOUNG GUNS

What kind of season was it for the U21s and U18s? The men in charge at Kirkby give their verdicts

Academy director Alex Ingelethorpe on instilling the very best values in Liverpool FC's next generation

"IT TAKES TALENT, A LITTLE HUMILITY, RESPONSIBILITY, ROBUSTNESS, DRIVE AND MOTIVATION TO BE A FIRST-TEAM PLAYER FOR THIS CLUB"



We have approximately 175 boys to look after at the Liverpool FC Academy. As you can imagine, it's a lively place, full of energy and with something always going on.

It means all of the staff are busy and it's a very enjoyable work environment. Despite having so much to do, both on and off the pitch, none of us ever lose sight of why we exist – that is to produce players who are good enough for the first team.

Those lads have to be able to play with a certain type of style and intent. We want to attack. We want to have the ball and be progressive with it, we don't want to make a million passes and go nowhere.

I firmly believe that if you go to see any Liverpool side in action you should be able to identify them by the type of football they try to produce, rather than just the colour of the shirt. Obviously young players who are developing will inevitably make mistakes as they learn. But once their intentions are right, we feel they are on the correct path.

Players will join us at a variety of ages and progress up through the various levels. The toughest period of that development to navigate in English football is between the ages of 17 to 22. We have a lot of talented individuals in that bracket right now. Creativity and patience are required to help them through this section of their careers.



Inspiration from the walls of the Academy

At the same time I don't like players to be too patient because they should always want to move on to the next step. The best players tend to not accept the fact they aren't in the side. Those in the Under-9s will want to be playing in the Under-10s; the Under-13s will want to be with the Under-14s. That's a healthy situation because they need to be constantly progressing.

Of course the jump from the Under-21s to senior football is the trickiest to make. The 21s is a wonderful learning environment, but you don't want

players there too long because they'll become disillusioned and feel like they are being held back. There comes a point when the only way to find out about certain elements of football is to be playing alongside and against men with three points at stake. That's why we use the loan system quite a lot.

Football at first-team level anywhere is demanding, both mentally and physically. We want our boys to feature for Liverpool's first team in the future. If they do, that will consist of an intense schedule. During 2014/15 there were league games, the Champions League involvement and the team reached the latter stages of both domestic cups. On top of that there were international commitments too. So if our lads are to eventually go into that set-up they need to be robust and be capable of playing lots of games. We encourage it as much as possible and try to push the boundaries in that area. That's why we compete in lots of tournaments as well as the normal league and cup competitions.

"Football at first-team level is demanding mentally as well as physically"

Top-class players also need to be able to take responsibility, which is another characteristic we try to develop. Responsibility can come in different forms for different players. For some, like Steven Gerrard, it was about stepping up to score winning goals in vital games. For others it might be choosing the pass that benefits the team most or keeping their cool at a heated moment. Not getting sent-off is taking responsibility because you're ensuring your side isn't put at a numerical disadvantage.

As well as being robust and responsible, our players need to be accustomed to how the first team plays. Obviously during 2014/15

"Kenny Dalglish was the reason I signed for Liverpool. It was his reputation and his stature in the game that persuaded me and the fact that he gave me a particulary smart pair of boots."

STEVE McMANAMAN





Brendan Rodgers used some different formations. So our U-21s needed to be familiar with those set-ups and what each one entailed.

Mick Beale did a great job ensuring that was the case by having the lads play three at the back in certain games or use a diamond in midfield. It meant that when Jordan Williams, Cameron Brannagan, Jerome Sinclair, Jordan Rossiter or Jordon Ibe were involved with the first team they knew exactly what was required of them.

Of those five players it was obviously Ibe who featured most. He's a great example of the work we are trying to do here. This time last year Jordon had returned from a loan at Birmingham City. He found it tough there, albeit with the last day ending well as he helped them to avoid relegation. But if you asked him now he'd probably say it prepared him perfectly for his loan at Derby County, which went very well.

Despite his clear progress and the fact he signed a new contract recently, he is well aware that he needs to get better and wants to. He's committed to improving every day while remaining

"It's not a case of football or schooling anymore – players can do both"

humble. He's still the same grounded young lad he's always been.

That humility is important and it's something I've seen a lot of when Steve Heighway has been here at Kirkby to do some coaching. He won every major medal at Liverpool during the 1970s and still has a great passion for the game. As a coach he helped to guide Steven Gerrard from a young boy to the verge of the first team, so for us to have his expertise on site is hugely beneficial for the boys.

Obviously not every one of them will make it as a footballer, but we want to give them every chance of doing so while ensuring they don't sacrifice their education at the same time.





Young Steven Gerrard (top) always had the perfect attitude

I don't think it's a case of football or schooling. Players can do both if they have some assistance and careful planning. Our education and welfare officer Phil Roscoe helps with that.

It means we have boys getting great results in their GCSEs, BTECs and A-levels. They combine the work with being talented players because they are driven and want to do well in all walks of life. Those are the type of individuals we want at Liverpool because that type of drive, or motivation, is what's required to be a first-team player for this club.

U21s coach Mick Beale wants to see an Academy player in the Reds first team for every fixture

"WE HAVE SOME OUTSTANDING TALENTS WHO CAN GO ALL THE WAY"



Football is a team sport but how we develop our players at U21 level is very much tailored to each individual's needs.

We have to ensure they are ready to take what is a huge step up to the senior squad – but that is not an exact science. Aside from our training that is designed to bring them to a higher level each day, some of the lads will need to go out on loan while others will need more time in our team.

We've had plenty of players spend weeks at other clubs during 2014/15. Jack Dunn and Kevin Stewart both scored on their debuts for Cheltenham in League Two, while Kevin also found the net to help Burton win the title and became a hero to their fans.

Others played in big games and experienced promotion or relegation. Those moments are real learning experiences. We take a lot of pride in seeing them go somewhere and make an impact.

Each loan is geared towards what we feel the lad requires at that particular time. Some of them will need to go to a club where there is plenty of competition for places and they are challenged to fight for a spot. Whereas others will join a team where they are almost certain to be in the starting XI each week because we feel they need to play a lot of games at a certain level.

Of course not every loan will work out perfectly, or they won't always be season-long deals. Instead a boy might go somewhere for a few weeks where he plays 10 or 11 games. No matter what the situation, they all get the benefit of going away from the Academy for a while and sampling the reality of first-team football where each point matters and players are competing for their livelihoods in front of crowds. It's important our lads get to see that for themselves. Those who don't go on loan are then challenged to step up and become leaders in the U21 side and we've been really pleased with how that process has worked. The lads have taken responsibility and performed well, which enabled us to challenge for the title. Our displays in the second half of the season were the type of football we have been striving for, although we know it can be even better. In the end we missed out on top spot, but it was a great effort that saw us produce some superb attacking play and score a lot of goals.

What has also been pleasing for me is the number of players who've spent time working with the first team at Melwood. Ultimately they all want to be there on a permanent basis. But, for now, it's about gradual steps.

There have been days when five or



Midfielder Connor Randall flies past a Man United opponent



Defender Alex O'Hanlon v Everton



Sheyi Ojo scores from the spot in a 4-4 draw with Norwich

Daniel Trickett-Smith against Southampton

2014/15 Under-21s

	Apps	Gls
Danny Ward	9	0
Connor Randall	16	0
Kevin Stewart	13(1)	0
Jordan Williams	13	1
Lloyd Jones	12	0
Jordan Rossiter	3(1)	1
Ryan McLaughlin	10	3
Jordan Lussey	4(1)	1
Kristoffer Peterson	2	0
Cameron Brannagan	19(1)	5
Sheyi Ojo	8(2)	4
Harry Wilson	14(4)	6
Samed Yesil	6(5)	3
Joe Maguire	18(1)	0
Sergi Canos	9(7)	1
Marc Pelosi	1(5)	0
Lawrence Vigouroux	9	0
Daniel Trickett-Smith	5(7)	2
Ryan Kent	10(2)	6
Daniel Cleary	13(4)	2
Alex O'Hanlon	10(4)	1
Adam Philips	2	2
Pedro Chirivella	5(2)	0
Jerome Sinclair	11(2)	4
Ryan Fulton	4	0
Brad Smith	5(3)	0
Jack Dunn	2	1
Jordon Ibe	1	0
Madger Gomes	0(2)	0
Mamadou Sakho	1	0
Ovie Ejaria	1(3)	0
Sam Hart	3(2)	0
Jose Enrique	1	0
Tom Brewitt	0(1)	0
Corey Whelan	2(1)	0

six of them have gone there. During international breaks more than double that number have gone to work with Brendan Rodgers and his staff. Every minute in that set-up aids their development. But, to ensure they keep their feet on the ground, they still come to the Academy each morning to have their breakfast and check in.

Of course some of our players didn't just train with the senior team, they played too. Jordan Rossiter scored on his debut against Middlesbrough in the Capital One Cup, with Jordan Williams



Ryan Kent scores in a 3-1 win at Goodison

"It's been pleasing to see so many lads working with the first team"

netting in the penalty shoot-out at the end of the same game. Jordon Ibe started the Merseyside derby and won man-of-the-match, while Jerome Sinclair made a few appearances as a substitute towards the back end of the season. That is all very positive.

However, our aim for the future is to get a player from the Academy featuring for the first team week in, week out. We want one of the lads to be on the teamsheet on a regular basis. Making that happen is a real challenge for all of us but that's why we are here. We believe we have some outstanding talents in the group – players who can go all the way – and will work as hard as possible to help them fulfill their potential.



Some advice from Steve McManaman

Under-18s coach Neil Critchley assesses a season of ups and downs for his group of youngsters



"THESE ARE YOUNG LADS LEARNING ABOUT FOOTBALL AND LIFE"

You will often get inconsistent results in under-age football and that applied to our side during 2014/15. We defeated Manchester United 4-0 and lost 5-0 to Everton.

While you would much rather win, it's probably the games such as that derby where the players learn most. It wasn't pleasant to suffer a loss like that. However, the lads responded really well to it and a bad experience was turned into a positive.

A big reason for such a variety of scorelines is the fact that we didn't pick the same XI week in, week out. Instead we had some of our lads moving up to the Under-21s or others from the Under-16s coming in to our side. That's just the nature of under-age football.

Some people say results don't matter at academy level. We don't think that way: we obviously want to win and develop players. It has to go hand-in-hand. Clearly players need to progress, but their progression needs to involve learning how to win important games and trophies. Ultimately the lads want to get to the first team and if they do reach that level it's all about winning. So you need to know how to [win] from an early age.

For young players it's about getting as many different on-field experiences as possible in order to help them develop. That's why competing in the Under-19 Champions League was of real benefit. We played Real Madrid in the group stages, winning 3-2 at home, and our progression went down to the wire where we had to defeat Basel by two clear goals to move on to the knockout round.

That's not a situation you face too often as a coach or a player, so for the lads to manage it correctly and get the right result was very satisfying. Such an experience will really stand them in good stead if they encounter a similar scenario in the future.

Another test was going away to face Benfica in the last 16. Finalists the previous season, they were a tough side and we lost 2-1 in a tight game. Overall we felt we gave a good account of ourselves in the competition although we thought we could have gone further.

Obviously a number of players excelled on that stage. With most games on LFCTV now supporters are very aware of our players and how they are performing. That means they are being judged and scrutinised. Expectancy can be a burden but it



Jerome Sinclair scores against Real Madrid last October


Midfielder Ovie Ejaria



"Competing in the U19 Champions League was a real benefit for the boys"

also acts as a motivator for some players: they like it and seem to thrive on it; others don't like it. That's human nature. As coaches we have to deal with it on an individual basis and try to protect those who need it.

That relationship between coach and player is important because they are young lads who are growing up and learning about football and life. We have to help them as much as we can and keep them away from any pitfalls that teenagers can encounter.

Unfortunately, the end of the season also means the end of their time at Liverpool for some players. Breaking that news to them is extremely difficult as they might have been here for years. It's one of the major downsides to my job, but I ensure I am involved in that process because I've worked with the lads on a daily basis and know them well. What's most important is that we make the right decision for the boy and his future. Just because they leave Liverpool doesn't mean they won't go on to have a career in the game. Most of them will be back for pre-season with another club in a few weeks.

After a short break we'll return to Kirkby on 1 July. Then the enjoyable madness of another season begins.


Wade Maxwell gets the winner v Sunderland

2014/15 Under-18s

	Apps	Gls
Owen Wheeler	4	0
Dharius Waldron	1(3)	0
Lewis Travis	13(3)	0
Corey Whelan	28(3)	1
Kristoff Polgar	16(2)	0
Josh Dobie	1(2)	0
Yan Dhanda	10(1)	0
Herbie Kane	7(2)	3
Will Marsh	19(2)	9
Callum Nicholas	13(10)	4
Jack Watts	3(6)	0
Ben Jackson	2(2)	0
Wade Maxwell	7(10)	4
Andrew Firth	20	0
Sam Hart	22(2)	2
Tom Brewitt	24(2)	2
David Roberts	3(1)	0
Ovie Ejaria	19(5)	3
Sergi Canos	20(4)	14
Adam Phillips	16(5)	2
Jerome Sinclair	15	14
Ryan Kent	12(1)	5
Ryan Fulton	10	0
Harry Wilson	14(4)	12
Pedro Chirivella	16(3)	0
Nathan Sheron	2(1)	0
Kane Lewis	13(5)	0
Okera Simmonds	1(1)	0
Trent Arnold	14(4)	1
Ben Woodburn	1	0
Sheyi Ojo	8(2)	3
Jake Brimmer	5(1)	0
Jordan Rossiter	9	0
Joe Maguire	7	0
Daniel Cleary	7	2
Cameron Brannagan	5	2
Alex O'Hanlon	4(1)	0
Madger Gomes	6(2)	1
Conor Masterson	5	0
Matthew Virtue-Thick	8(1)	0
George Johnston	3(1)	0
Harvey Whyte	4(3)	0
Shamal George	3	0
Michael Parker	5	0
Kris Owens	1(3)	0
Toni Gomes	3	3
Liam Griffin	0(1)	0


Adam Phillips v Newcastle

Midfielder Will Marsh celebrates a goal v Man United

ANOTHER LEVEL

Profiling the half-dozen youngsters knocking on the first-team door

Cameron Brannagan

Having joined the Academy as an Under-9 player, the Manchester-born attacking midfielder has been an impressive performer for the Under-21s in recent seasons.

That form was initially rewarded when he was picked in the 18-man squad for Liverpool's FA Cup win over Oldham Athletic in January of last year. Season 2014/15 saw him named in a matchday squad on five more occasions, although he is well aware that the jump to senior level is a big one. "It's massive. You see those players on TV, but when you go to Melwood to train you realise just how good they actually are."

Cameron is hoping to go out on loan next season. "U21s is a good level but I need to play against men," he reasons.





Jordan Williams

Capable of playing at the back or as a holding midfielder, the Welsh youth international debuted against Middlesbrough in the Capital One Cup third-round tie. After replacing Jordan Rossiter he netted a spot-kick in the epic shoot-out. "When I was walking towards goal I looked up at the Kop and thought: what am I doing? The fans were great though, they started cheering. That gave me confidence. I'd never taken a penalty in the Youth Cup or any game like that." He didn't add to that senior appearance during 2014/15 but was in the matchday squad a further half-a-dozen times.



Jerome Sinclair

A prolific goalscorer at Academy level, the striker made his Liverpool debut as a 16-year-old in a League Cup tie at West Brom back in September 2012. He moved to Wigan Athletic on loan in March of this year before returning to sample more first-team action with Brendan Rodgers' side.

A substitute appearance during the 1-1 draw at Chelsea in May was followed by another outing from the bench against Crystal Palace at Anfield the following weekend.

Jerome believes he is at the ideal club to flourish in the years ahead: "You can see that with the philosophy that the manager has: if young players are showing they have talent, he's willing to put them in and give them a go, which is rare for a big club such as Liverpool."

Jordon Ibe

After 20 games and five goals in the Championship while on loan at Derby County, the former Academy winger returned to Anfield in January and quickly forced his way into Brendan Rodgers' first-team thoughts. Fourteen appearances in a senior red shirt during the second half of the season, including nine starts, illustrate how highly the 19-year-old is rated by those at Melwood. "Ultimately football is about scoring more goals than the opposition," he says. "I've realised if I can contribute on that front, it makes it difficult for the manager not to pick you. That's what I want to do more of: create goals and score more of them."

London-born Jordon recently signed a new contract at the club, with the manager declaring: "He still has a lot of work to do to become that consistent performer at the top level, but there's no doubting his potential and he has really grown and developed."



Jordan Rossiter

"He showed wonderful composure," was one of the compliments Brendan Rodgers paid the then-17-year-old when he netted on his debut against Middlesbrough at Anfield in the Capital One Cup back in September.

"Getting the right result was important," Rossiter said after the 2-2 draw concluded with a 14-13 penalty shoot-out victory for the Reds. "Scoring wouldn't have been as good if we'd gone out. Afterwards Jordan [Williams] was giving me a lift home and we were stuck in traffic for ages. While we were waiting we kept laughing and saying: 'Has tonight really happened?'"

An unused substitute on four other occasions, injury curtailed Rossiter's season in January. But the midfielder has already displayed enough ability to suggest he can challenge for a place in the first team over the next few seasons.

Danny Ward

The young goalkeeper, who originally joined the Academy from Wrexham, featured on the bench 23 times during 2014/15. Earlier this year first-choice keeper Simon Mignolet said of his deputy: "In training he's been very good. We work together every day and his attitude is first-class. If he continues in the same way he'll have a good future in the game because he's got talent. At the moment he hasn't played many senior games. I'd imagine he'll go out on loan at some point in the future because every footballer needs to play if they want to develop. When you are a young keeper it's important to get that experience."Since then Danny has enjoyed a short spell away from Liverpool, when he joined League Two Morecambe for a month's loan back in March.



HOME AND AWAY

Teixeira heads list of Liverpool loanees to make waves away from Anfield last season



Joao Carlos in Brighton's away colours

They say what doesn't kill you makes you as stronger. When Joao Carlos Teixeria ended his loan spell with Brighton & Hove Albion, he'd witnessed the dismissal of the manager who took him there – former Liverpool defender Sami Hyypia – and had his own season ended in April by a broken leg.

He'd also done enough to not only help the Seagulls survive in the Championship but win the South Coast club's Young Player of the Season award – followed closely by Liverpool FC's Academy Players' Player of the Season prize.

The Portuguese youth international played 35 times for Albion, scoring six goals. A feature in *The Guardian* described him as 'a creative menace who has been likened to the former Portugal and Barcelona midfielder Deco and looks a cut above Championship level'.

"Teixeira is a creative menace who's been likened to the great Deco"

In the same piece he revealed that both Hyypia and his successor as Brighton boss, Chris Hughton, asked him to "play behind the striker, look for space, assist, pass, get in the box and score goals – overall to be creative, which is what I like to do."

Elsewhere Jordon Ibe, interviewed elsewhere in this issue, enjoyed a successful stint with Championship side Derby County, with then-Rams boss Steve McClaren commenting: "His all-round game has improved, his defensive responsibilities, his work-rate, his concentration, but the biggest thing is becoming a team player."

In the Premier League defenders Sebastian Coates and Andre Wisdom helped their temporary clubs,



Club award winner

Seagulls scorer

Sunderland and West Brom, to stay up. The latter played under both Alan Irvine and his successor Tony Pulis at the Hawthorns, impressing enough to earn a new long-term contract from Liverpool.

"I definitely picked up some good experience at West Brom and I am grateful to them for the opportunity they gave me and the faith they showed in me," said Andre after news of the new deal was confirmed. "But now I'm looking forward to challenging for a place back here at Liverpool."

In League Two there was a triple-move to Cheltenham Town at the start of the year for centre-back Lloyd Jones, full-back Kevin Stewart and attacking midfielder Jack Dunn. Stewart and Dunn both netted on their debuts in a 2-1 victory over Oxford United.

Kevin also scored at the start of May when he had switched to Burton Albion. With Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink's team having already won promotion from League Two, they won the division on the final day when the full-back struck a late winner at Cambridge to clinch the title and earn hero status among the Brewers fans.



On-loan Reds 2014/15

Luis Alberto (Malaga)
Iago Aspas (Sevilla)
Sebastian Coates (Sunderland)
Jack Dunn (Cheltenham Town, Burton Albion)
Jordon Ibe (Derby County)
Tiago Ilori (Bordeaux)
Lloyd Jones (Cheltenham Town, Accrington Stanley)
Sheyi Ojo (Wigan Athletic)
Divock Origi (Lille)
Rafael Paez (Bologna)
Connor Randall (Shrewsbury Town)
Jerome Sinclair (Wigan Athletic)
Brad Smith (Swindon Town)
Kevin Stewart (Cheltenham Town, Burton Albion)
Joao Teixeira (Brighton)
Danny Ward (Morecambe)
Jordan Williams (Notts County)
Andre Wisdom (West Brom)



Blink of an Ibe

Fresh from signing his new deal, winger Jordon Ibe tells Simon Hughes he can't wait for next season



Sometimes, questions do not need to be asked. Sometimes, footballers have the answers that you are looking for.

The ink is not yet dry on Jordon Ibe's new five-year Liverpool contract. He leans casually against a window at the club's offices on Chapel Street. The window offers clear views of the Liver Building. He is taking time to consider his feelings. He turns and his eyes wander into the middle distance, across the River Mersey, to Wirral and Wales.

His initial response is one you'd probably anticipate. "I'm delighted. When someone has faith in you, there's no better feeling," he begins. Then he goes a little further, without being prompted – revealing his ambitions and how he plans to realise them.

"I'm hoping this is just the start for me. I want to play in lots of games. I'd like to play in the Champions League eventually. But I know I've got to start chipping in with goals. I realise this season we haven't scored enough. If you score goals, it's easier to win matches. And from a personal point of view, if you score goals it's a lot more difficult for the manager to leave you out."

He continues: "I'm looking forward to the summer. I'll have a few breaks abroad and recharge the batteries if it's possible. But I'm coming back in early. I'll be working with Alex Inglethorpe [the Academy director] on my shooting. I know I need to improve on every aspect of my game. But I know too that goalscoring gives you confidence. It can lift other parts of your game to new levels. I want to give myself every chance of starting next season in form already.

"Alex is great like that. I don't take my position for granted and I certainly don't consider myself an established first-team




7
Garuda
LFC

player just because I've signed a new contract. And just because I'm not at Melwood rather than the Academy these days, it doesn't mean my relationship with Alex ends. He's desperate for the young players to improve. He's always telling us how education in football never ends. He pushes you. It's great when you have that support."

Ibe explains why he believes why Liverpool is the place for him. "I'm 19 years old. The club have shown faith in me. The manager has shown faith in me. All of the coaches have too. I know the season has been difficult, but the intention is there to play exciting, attacking football. Over the last few years it has been proven that young players get a chance here and if you do well, you'll be pushed all the way."

The first thing you notice about Ibe when you meet him is his size. His shoulders are those of a Titan, his chest as broad as an oak barrel. When you consider his directness – rare in modern wingers – and his balance, it might make you think of John Barnes.

"I don't do any extra gym work – if you hammer it you can go too big"

Ibe smiles, a bit embarrassed at the suggestion. "When people say nice things or bad things, I tend not to listen because it's important at this age not to get too high or too low. With time, I'm sure I'll learn how to deal with it all. I don't use social media as much any more and I don't read the papers. I just focus on myself. John Barnes is a legend and it's nice you might think that. But I'm just trying to be me and see what happens."

Ibe says his physique is natural. "I don't do any extra gym work," he insists. "I'm lucky I was born this way and if you hammer it, you'll go too big and lose that bounce in your speed. I'm quite relaxed about it. I know a few of the lads use the gym quite a lot and I can understand why because the Premier League is very demanding physically. You have to be ready for the battle."

The conversation leads back to his time at Wycombe Wanderers, where he made his football league debut as a 15-year-old. There, he was among men. Gareth Ainsworth was 20 years his senior.

"I took a lot of strength from that experience. The dressing-room was lively – full of players who knew their way around the leagues. They took care of the younger boys like me. But I was aware that I was being picked because they thought I could deal with it. So I had to step up and show I was ready to fight for the team."

Ibe was born in Guy's Hospital near London Bridge and raised in Bermondsey, in the south-east of the capital. He started to play football on the all-weather pitches just over the road from his home and was soon recruited by Charlton Athletic. He sees



Tearing down the wing v West Brom


Melwood training with team-mate Emre Can

"From an early age Jordon was fearless – always taking on defenders"

now that his release from there was a motivation. "I don't get too wound-up about most things. But I was desperate to prove to myself I could make it." Later at Wycombe, youth-team coach Richard Dobson became a guardian.

"He was always better and above his age group, physically," Dobson has told the *Liverpool Echo*. "He would go past kids of his age with ease and he always had that acceleration, pace and strength. He could use both feet too.

"We pushed him up the age groups. At 13 he would be playing in the Under-16s, and by 14 he was in the youth side, effectively the U18s. He needed that challenge, that test against more mature players. I alerted the England scouts to him at 13/14, they came down and watched him. They were umming and ahhing about him, but we knew we had something special."

Ibe was 14 when he visited Melwood for the first time. He also made similar trips to the training grounds of Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur. Yet his mother, Charlett, insisted he remained at Wycombe. "She was under immense pressure to cave in and let her son sign for one of the Premier League clubs," Dobson recalled. "But she did what was best for him. She wanted him to continue with his schoolwork until he was 16, which is what he did."

Dobson, Gary Waddock, Wycombe's first-team manager, and Steve Hayes – the club's owner at the time – agreed with Ibe's family that he would be sold if the right offer was made and arranged one-on-one sessions with a psychologist to prepare the player for the changes in his life that would inevitably follow.

"We didn't want him being overawed or believing the hype. I think it worked. Jordon is polite, well mannered and humble, even to this day. He gets that from his mum. When his career is over, it is her that he should thank."

On his full debut for Wycombe, Ibe scored in a 2-1 defeat to Sheffield Wednesday. "He was fearless," Waddock remembers. "He played the same way whether it was for the U14s, the U18s or the first team, he just ran at defenders, tried to take them on."

In celebrating the goal, Ibe ran almost the full length of the pitch to embrace with his mum, earning a



"This is a young squad at Liverpool and we are learning on the job"



Letting fly and thudding the Everton goalpost

"I have always believed this is a great club for young players"

booking in the process. That moment was nearly four years ago. He is unsure of what he might do when he achieves the same feat for Liverpool.

"Since getting into the first team here, I've celebrated other people's goals and got carried away in the moment. Like against Tottenham [in the dramatic 3-2 victory at Anfield], you lose yourself. You know the crowd is there but the adrenalin takes over and you can't hear anything. It's a weird feeling. When I do it myself, I really don't know what I'll do."

When Ibe signed for Liverpool in 2012, his family came with him, settling in Ormskirk. This summer, he will find a place of his own. "They've given me everything and I'm very fortunate to have a solid group of people behind me. I realise I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now if it wasn't for them. They help me not lose sight of things: like why I wanted to become a footballer in the first place. I know this is a serious business but they don't let me lose touch of myself – the love for the game, wanting to do better.

"I'm still a kid but being out on loan has helped me grow up, first at Birmingham City and then at Derby County. Steve McClaren really helped me a lot [at Derby]. I definitely feel as though I've benefited for the experience because the Championship is a tough competition. There are no easy games.

"And being away from them [his family] has toughened me up again. You have to stand on your own two feet day by day and that's important. Whatever happens, I know they're always just a phone-call away."

Against Everton, Ibe started his first Premier League game in two seasons and was named as man of the match after the 0-0 draw at Goodison Park. His performance prompted Steven Gerrard to speak about the teenager: "There is huge potential there with the right coaching and advice. If he wants it, there could be another superstar around the corner."

Ibe warns he is not "at his level" yet, though he takes confidence in the fact that he believes he has learnt already how to be selfish in a team of older players. "Generally, it's quite a young squad and we're learning on the job," he says. "You see Chelsea, they don't play well sometimes but they find a way to win games. That's something we all have to work on.

"But I've always believed Liverpool is a great club to be at for young players. I'm enjoying it here and I've been happy since the day I first signed a few years ago. I'd like to stay here for many more years. The thing for us now is to win medals, that's what I really want to do."

Jordon's footballing heroes

"I grew up watching videos of Zinedine Zidane. He had the lot – what a player. He was unstoppable, unreal. I suppose it's a bit scary when I say it like this, but he retired when I was only 11 years old. It was clear to me even then, though, that he was the best player in the world.

"The player I learn most from is Daniel Sturridge. He's a good friend but he's a bit older and takes care of me. We are both attacking players and work a lot together on the training ground. Hopefully one day we'll be able to take that relationship onto the pitch and make it a success.

"In terms of the tough players I've come across, I'd have to say that Mamadou Sakho is the toughest – the man's like a machine. I've seen players just bounce off him. He loves a physical battle. He's difficult to get past and if you do, he never gives up. He's very fast too."



Found Finnan

Former Reds defender Steve Finnan prefers to operate under the radar, he tells Glenn Price



'Started from the bottom, now we're here' are lyrics from the rapper Drake's eponymous 2013 hit. Those lyrics could have been written for Steve Finnan eight years earlier as he held old 'Big Ears' in Istanbul close to midnight local-time. "I probably did my apprenticeship three or four times over really," he admits.

The right-back used every rung on the ladder to achieve his success. He is the only player to have played at all four levels of English football, plus the Conference, Intertoto Cup, UEFA Cup, Champions League and World Cup. Not bad for a Limerick lad who was rejected by lower-league clubs at the age of 16.

"I'd have to give credit and praise to myself if only because my situation was a lot different from a lot of footballers," he says. "I was rejected by Wimbledon and Crystal Palace when I was a kid. But all I wanted to be was a footballer, so having to go for trials at non-league clubs and then coming all the way through the divisions and eventually coming to Liverpool and making international appearances was a different career. But it meant I did well and I wouldn't have had it any other way."

Steve joined Liverpool from Fulham in the summer of 2003 for £3.5 million – a bargain for the level of performances throughout his career in a red shirt. "The interest from Liverpool came halfway through the season and around January I started hearing they wanted me. I had to play the second half of the campaign knowing that [the Liverpool move] was going to happen. As much as I was really enjoying my time at Fulham, Liverpool is such a big club and it was an opportunity that I could never turn down. They were professional in everything. I could see they really wanted me and I just felt it was the right move. I couldn't wait for it to happen."


With boss Benitez

Not everyone at Anfield was as excited as Finnan. The Irish defender's arrival threatened to limit Jamie Carragher's opportunities. In an interview soon after Steve had signed, Carra said: "There's no point sulking about it. There's not a lot you can do, except impress the manager in training and in games. Or find out Finnan's address and send the boys round!"

Finnan, laughing, thinks that his move arguably benefited Jamie in the long run. "When I came to Liverpool he was playing in a number of different positions. But most of the time I was there, he was playing centre-back and he would probably say that was his most favoured position and enjoyed it there most. So I probably helped him."

"Benitez wanted to do things his way and you had to go along with that"

Finnan was certainly appreciated by the Kop too, and most importantly his manager. He played in 99 Premier League games between August 2004 and May 2007 under Rafael Benitez, a boss who often rotated his teams. "I guess I was one of the fortunate ones. He did like to change the side around a bit. When I first came in, I was a little in-and-out of the team and



at the end of my last season too. There are going to be those times for every player. But overall he gave me a lot of game-time.

"Working under him was enjoyable because the team had success. That was the main thing. Sometimes it was hard. He was a totally different manager to ones that I'd had in the past. You could see that he wanted to do everything his way and you had to go along with that. Maybe some players, like myself, sometimes found it difficult to speak to him about certain stuff because he was 'always right'. But you can't say that's a negative in any way because he's obviously a great manager who has won trophies, and I think he did get the best out of the team with what he had there.

"I learnt a lot in his training sessions, the matches and the way he prepared. He was very thorough with everything. It was a good spell for the club when you look back."

Everyone knew what they would be getting with the Irish defender in the side. Speaking in 2006, Benitez said: "Finnan is a player who will always play at a consistent level. He will be seven, eight, nine or even ten out of ten every week. Some players find a good level for individual games but don't do the same every week. Finnan does it for a whole season."

Steve continues: "That's what people saw in me, my consistency. I think I preferred it that way, rather than score three or four goals a season and be a little up-and-down form-wise. I was never really that flashy a player. I only scored one goal for Liverpool. The role of a full-back has changed a bit since then. It's not always necessary but the teams that play the best football normally have their full-backs almost acting like midfielders in terms of their energy and the way they have to get up and down the pitch. They naturally have to chip in with a few goals."

Finnan's first taste of Champions League football was actually that unforgettable 2004/05 season. "It's incredible to think that it's been 10 years. I started against Milan in the

Champions League action in the Nou Camp, 2007

final but felt a bit of an injury in the first half. I wanted to stay on and it was disappointing, but it was the right decision because I wouldn't have lasted long.

"I was actually inside the dressing-room when I heard the sound of the first goal. You could tell the difference between the fans, so you knew it was us who scored. The comeback wasn't something you'd expect with the way the first half went, but it was surreal. That's why I moved to Liverpool."

He wouldn't have to wait long to reach that stage again: Athens 2007. "I guess I was bit fortunate getting to two finals in my first three seasons in the Champions League. And that's why I have to give Benitez credit for what he could get out of a team. He was suited to that type of football and knockout competition."

A year-and-a-bit later, Finnan left Liverpool for Espanyol in Spain's Catalonia province. "It was a strange ending at Liverpool. It was pre-season at the time and I wasn't really playing in those games, and you're not sure whether the manager is going to want you for that season.

"It was just a shame. The manager mentioned to me, very late in pre-season, that I could move. We're talking a couple days before the transfer window closes, so it didn't give me much time. With Albert Riera coming in from Espanyol, I was put into that deal. It didn't go too well there. In hindsight I probably shouldn't have jumped into a move with only about a day or two to think about it. I got injured in the first couple of weeks and had to have two operations that year so didn't play too much.

"It was unfortunate because the club was good and living there was fine. It was a nice club and a really nice city. I learnt a bit of Spanish. But then after my injuries, it just became about recovering from that and getting fit."

Steve is now almost five years into retirement and, like Istanbul, he can't believe how fast the time has gone. He helps run a property business with his brother. "I'm enjoying it. It's totally different to football, as you can imagine. We started it about 12 years ago, doing little schemes and it's just got bigger and bigger. My brother did all the work while I was playing football and he knows a lot on the building side of things because he used to be in that trade.

"I'd played football since 16 until I retired at 34 – that's 18 years pretty much everyday, being told when to train, when you're travelling, when you're playing and when to eat. You're on a strict schedule all the time and when you don't have that, it's something you have to get used to.

"I still watch Liverpool matches. People haven't really seen me since I retired – I'm not really interested in being a pundit even if I'd actually get those jobs. I've been to a few games. I don't watch all the matches from my other teams but every time Liverpool are on, I watch and hope they do well. I'm always going to look out for them."



2006 FA Cup winner

"In Istanbul I was in the dressing-room when I heard our first goal go in"

Back at Anfield with Portsmouth, 2010





Every team needs one

Steve made 493 league appearances in his career, netting 17 goals for seven clubs: Welling United, Birmingham City, Notts County, Fulham, Liverpool, Espanyol and Portsmouth. He won 52 caps for the Republic of Ireland between 2000 and 2008, scoring twice.

His only Liverpool goal came in a 3-0 league win over West Brom at Anfield in September 2004, receiving a pass from John Arne Riise and beating keeper Russell Hoult at his near post (above).

Fellow ex-Red and Irishman Ronnie Whelan compared Finnan to another right-back, Phil Neal: "He is always steady and gives you 100% every game. He's the type of player every successful side needs."

ON THE SPOT

Liverpool Ladies youngster Katie Zelem is getting ready to roar for England's Young Lionesses in another big tournament this summer

Liverpool Ladies midfielder Katie Zelem heads to the European Under-19s Championships in Israel next month after sampling one of football strangest moments in the qualifiers.

The Reds 2014 Young Player of the Year was an ever-present during England's elite round of qualification in Northern Ireland back in April. The team looked to be heading out of the competition at that stage before a refereeing blunder forced one of the most bizarre replays in the history of the game, which made sports headlines all over the world.

Leah Williamson's successful 96th-minute penalty during England's 2-1 defeat to Norway had been disallowed by German referee Marija Kurtes because of encroachment by England players – but she wrongly awarded Norway a free-kick rather than ordering the spot-kick to be retaken. Following a successful appeal, UEFA ruled that the scenario should be re-played at Belfast's Seaview Stadium five days later.

Katie in the red jersey

All variables had to remain – the venue, the precise moment in the game when the penalty was awarded, and the same players on the pitch – as part of a surreal re-enactment. But before the 18 seconds took place, that same afternoon England had to play their third and final group game against Switzerland, knowing that they had to win for anything to rest on the re-taking of the spot-kick against the Norwegians!

As fate would have it, the Young Lionesses were awarded a penalty in that game too. Despite an offer from Katie to take the kick, Arsenal Ladies midfielder Williamson took on the duties and duly scored as England won the encounter 3-1.

Manchester-born Zelem tells us: "I've known Leah quite a while so we had quite an in-depth chat about it. We spoke about what would happen if we had a penalty in the Switzerland game because she had scored two in our 9-1 win over Northern Ireland in the first elite round game and gone the same way as she had against Norway.

"We wondered if the Norwegian keeper would be watching and so myself and Ella Ayane both offered to take it should that occur. But I think Leah just wanted reassurance and so she stepped up and scored that one as well."

And so, a couple of hours after the win over Switzerland, came that bizarre, brief replay versus Norway. Katie, 19, continues: "I think it's the first time anything like that had ever happened. None of us really thought the appeal would be upheld and found in our favour, so for it to happen was a great thing for us.

"It was funny because there was virtually no media present at the first two games and then



Leah Williamson coolly steps up to take the kick again…



Her well-placed kick has beaten the Norway keeper…



And her England team-mates rush to congratulate her…



There are still a few seconds of the match to go, though…



Until the referee blows the 'final' whistle once again…



And the Young Lionesses are definitely through this time!



when it came to that situation they were there in force to see those 18 seconds of football.

"Norway already knew they'd qualified so whether we scored or not was fairly irrelevant to them. I think everyone's heads were all over the place anyway, but we prepared like it was a normal game and had a full warm-up. We even went through set-pieces, which might seem odd but I think Mo [coach Mo Marley] was just preparing for anything in case they got a corner or something."

Williamson confidently converted her re-taken kick, this time in view of replacement referee Kateryna Zora. "We had played a full 90 minutes just two hours beforehand so I think everyone was ready for a kip really! But we did the full warm-up and Leah kept her calm to score and help us reach the finals."

"For those 18 seconds we had to prepare like it was a normal game"

In the forthcoming U19 finals England will line-up alongside Germany, Spain and Norway in a tough group. "We've looked at Israel and the heat over there is likely to be about 35 degrees so we are going to have to start preparing early," says Zelem. "I think it's just important that we remember how we got to Israel and take all those experiences from Northern Ireland into it. It's just so easy to forget how we got there.

"Talking to some of the girls, we were saying it is one of the strongest finals we've seen. There are a lot of



Prize winner!

"These Under-19 finals will be the strongest there have been"

strong teams in there, but we are a really close-knit team. A lot of the girls have grown up together at club level and also through the age-groups at international level and we have worked well. Everyone is equal on and off the pitch and we have a strong bench too, so whoever we're playing we will have a good side."

Katie believes England also have a core of players who can help them spring a surprise or two along the way. "Leah is a great all-round player and we've got a solid backbone to the team. We have Everton's Ellie Stewart and Gabby George as centre-backs and then Tash Flint and Keira Walsh from Man City upfront.

"I'm really looking forward to it. I've been involved in quite a lot of major tournaments now, so to be at another finals should keep me in really good stead for when I'm hopefully looking to move up into the senior team."

The only downside to Katie's trip to Israel is that she will miss a significant chunk of Liverpool's WSL season. "I was disappointed that the tournament clashes with the league season because I missed the Birmingham game earlier in the year due to international duty. Once you miss games it's hard to get back into the team, especially when the girls are playing well. I'm looking to play more for Liverpool so to miss another five games is a big blow, but international experience is really important and it doesn't come round very often."

In action for England


Gooaaal!

U19s finals: where when who

The UEFA Women's European Under-19s Championship takes place in Israel between 15 and 27 July. Eight teams will contest the competition in four host cities. England kick off against Germany in Rishon LeZion, a city just south of Tel Aviv, on 15 July, with Spain and Norway also in their group. The final takes place at the 24,000-capacity Netanya Stadium, 20 miles north of Tel Aviv, on 27 July.



Young players must be bold when they enter the senior-side environment

Neil MELLOR

When pre-season training resumes some of the club's young players will certainly be given the opportunity to impress the manager and the coaching staff.

Obviously their talent has got them to that point in their careers, but when they go to Melwood and are pitched into the environment of the senior team it's about more than just ability.

Personality is a huge factor. They need to make an impression and not be intimidated. I remember my dad, who was also a footballer, telling me this when I was about to train with the first team. So I went to the training ground with that aim. I wanted to make my mark and immediately set about doing so by leading the way during a few warm-up laps. The established players were looking at each other and saying: 'Who does he think he is?'

That didn't bother me. I wanted to prove I was there to make an impact. I was never a runner and knew I wouldn't lead the whole way, lots of the lads ended up overtaking me. But I had made my intentions known.

Players can do that in different ways. It might involve winning a 50/50 or demanding the ball from an experienced player who has been there for a few years. By doing that you are showing you want responsibility and you can deal with it.

It wasn't in training but Jordan Rossiter demonstrated something similar a few years ago in an Under-21s game against Man City. He stood up to City boss Patrick Vieira and defended his team-mates in a respectful manner. That immediately struck me as an example of a player with real personality. Vieira was obviously a fantastic midfielder, a World Cup winner with France, but here was a young lad who showed he wasn't intimidated by any reputation.

"You won't make it if you are weak or timid – you can't be overawed"



Jordan Rossiter has shown his personality

It's not just on the pitch where young players have to impose themselves. If you are lucky enough to be involved in pre-season training and the tour you'll spend each day around senior players. These could be guys you've watched on TV every week, lads with lots of medals and international experience. You have to forget about all that and engage with them.

In football if you are weak or timid you won't make it. It might be a team meeting or a meal or a game of pool or table tennis; you can't be overawed by what they've achieved in the game. You have to possess the bottle to strike up a conversation with them. You can't be so nervous that you gobble up your meal and get out of the room as quickly as possible.

Obviously it might be difficult to chat because there are so many languages spoken in a squad now, but you still have to try. Senior players do appreciate it when young lads make an effort. The flipside of that is if you can't interact with them away from the field how are you going to do it if you ever play together?

When the youngsters do feature in pre-season they will experience different things. Some might not play well, others will. That's football. If you don't produce your best you can't get too down about it. You have to keep going and continue working hard. For those who do perform strongly it's important not to get carried away.

I scored plenty of goals in friendlies in July and August, but I don't even count them. As much as it might seem huge at the time, pre-season is quickly forgotten once the real action begins.

Follow Neil on Twitter @NeilMellor33

88 SHOWCASE
Steven Gerrard's haul of awards and accolades



The bit at the back for Liverpool FC's legions of fans at home and all over the world...



72 Liverpool's summer tour



84 One for the collection



86 Postcards from Anfield



97 Oshoala on Instagram

THE MONTH AHEAD

JULY

Reds come to a land Down Under

Liverpool's 2015 tour takes them to Thailand, Australia and Malaysia.

It all gets underway when the Reds return to Thailand to take on the True All Stars at the Rajamangala Stadium in Bangkok on Tuesday 14 July.

Three days later, the touring party will be in Australia as the team faces Brisbane Roar at the Suncorp Stadium in Queensland – the state famous for the Great Barrier Reef – before lining up against Adelaide United at the Adelaide Oval in South Australia the following Monday 20 July. Adelaide is Australia's fifth-largest city and its redeveloped Oval, located among parklands and near the riverbank, hosts cricket as well as football.

Then comes a return to another LFC hotspot: Malaysia. The Reds will visit Kuala Lumpur for the first time since their 2011 pre-season tour, kicking off against a Malaysian XI at the city's Bukit Jalil National Stadium on Friday 24 July. Again, the reception is sure to be near-fever pitch from the country's loyal army of LFC fans.

Ian Ayre, the club's chief executive officer, says: "Last time the support we received in both countries was incredible. The tour gives our supporters a chance to see the team up close, no matter how far away from Anfield they might live."

You can keep up-to-date with all the latest at www.lfctour.com.





BIRTHDAY REDS

Danielle Gibbons 23 on 31 July
Jim Beglin 52 on 29 July
Alberto Moreno 23 on 5 July
Gary Gillespie 55 on 5 July
Gemma Bonner 24 on 13 July
Dejan Lovren 26 on 5 July
Satara Murray 22 on 1 July
Jan Molby 52 on 4 July
Peter Cormack 69 on 17 July
Ray Kennedy 64 on 28 July
Roger Hunt 77 on 20 July
Danny Ings 23 on 23 July
Dirk Kuyt 35 on 22 July
Craig Bellamy 36 on 13 July
Line Smorsgard 28 on 23 July



Anniversaries

28 years since Peter Beardsley joined the club from Newcastle United on 14 July
41 years since Ray Kennedy joined from Arsenal on 12 July
41 years since Bill Shankly stunned the footballing world by announcing his shock resignation on 12 July
54 years since Shanks' 'colossus' Ron Yeats was signed from Dundee United on 22 July
77 years since Billy Liddell joined the Reds from Scottish team Lochgelly Violet on 27 July



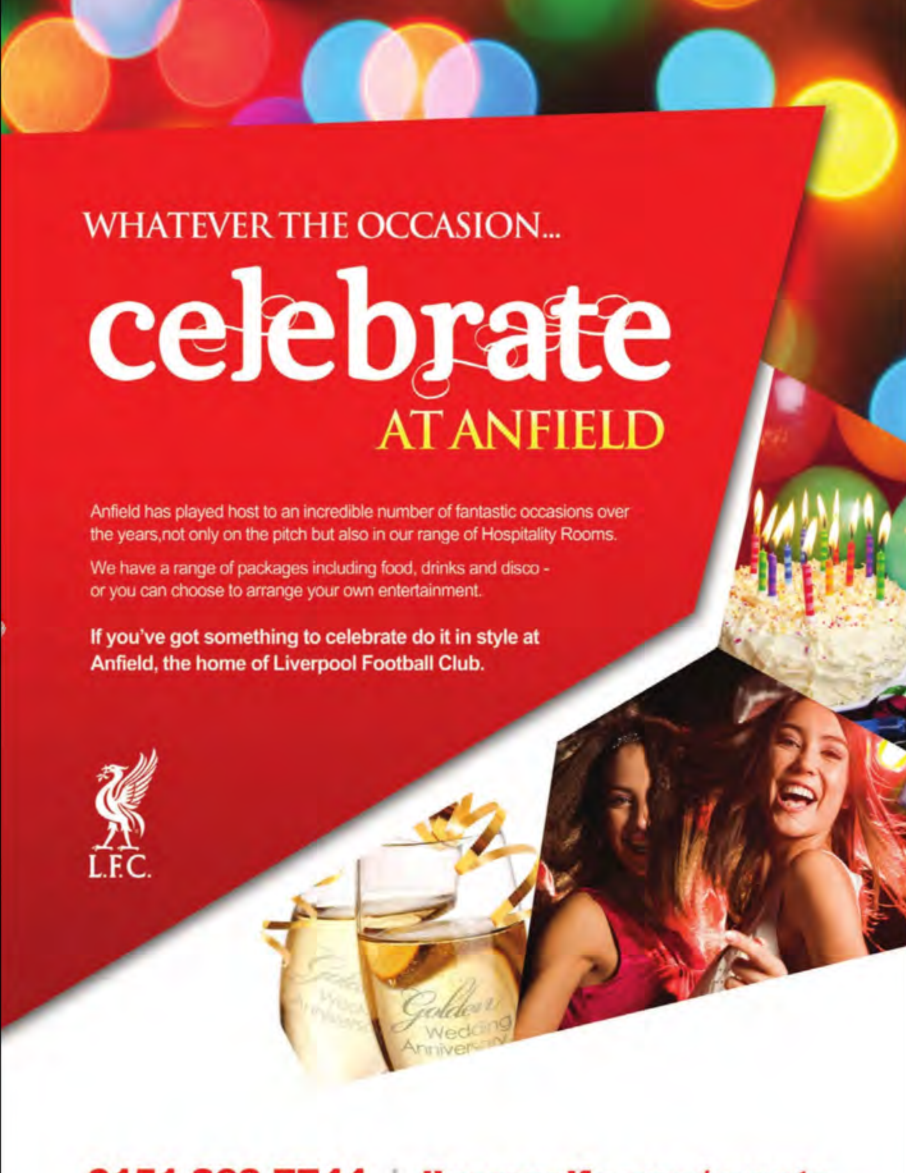
The girls are back

Liverpool Ladies are back in action following the mid-season break with a handful of fixtures.

Following a tough-looking return at Arsenal on Sunday 12 July, the Reds host Notts County at the Select Security Stadium six days later looking to avenge their 1-0 defeat at Meadow Lane last month.

A further FA WSL fixture at Birmingham on Sunday 26 July is sandwiched between the Reds' opening two Continental Tyres Trophy fixtures of the season: a derby against Everton at Widnes on Thursday 23 and a trip to Doncaster Rovers Belles on Thursday 30.

Liverpool went into the break fifth in the table, eight points behind leaders Chelsea with a game in hand. Boss Matt Beard is confident of a successful second half: "I've just said to the team that we've got to stick together. I've got every confidence in the group that we will bounce back and can have a positive second half of the campaign."



0151 263 7744 | liverpoolfc.com/events



The heroes of Istanbul

Looking to treat yourself this summer? If so, you could do worse than a piece of memorabilia marking one of the greatest nights in the club's history.

Jamie Carragher's 23 Foundation is offering Liverpool fans the chance to get their hands on a very special item – a replica of the 2005 UEFA Champions League final jersey signed by the heroes of that night.



Just 500 of these shirts have been made and are available on a first come, first served basis.

Each jersey has been hand-signed by Carragher, Steven Gerrard, Xabi Alonso, Vladimir Smicer, Dietmar Hamann, Luis Garcia, John Arne Riise, Josemi, Sami Hyypia, Igor Biscan, Jerzy Dudek, Harry Kewell, Djibril Cisse and more.

They're available at £395 plus shipping and come accompanied with a certificate of authenticity and images of the players signing the shirts. All profits raised go to the 23 Foundation.

To order yours, email Mike Lepic at mike@jamiecarragher.org. Payment can be made via PayPal, bank transfer or a cheque made payable to the 23 Foundation.

THE NEW FIXTURE LIST

The Reds begin the new campaign with a trip to Stoke on the weekend of 8 August. In the early part of the season the team also visit Arsenal and Manchester United. LFC's first home fixture is against promoted Bournemouth. There's an October derby at Goodison before Everton make the return across Stanley Park at the end of February. January sees us host both Arsenal and Man United in the space of a few days.

FIXTURE LIST 2015/2016

AUGUST
- 8 Stoke City (A)
- 15 Bournemouth (H)
- 22 Arsenal (A)
- 29 West Ham United (H)

SEPTEMBER
- 12 Manchester United (A)
- 19 Norwich City (H)
- 26 Aston Villa (H)

OCTOBER
- 3 Everton (A)
- 17 Tottenham Hotspur (A)
- 24 Southampton (H)
- 31 Chelsea (A)

NOVEMBER
- 7 Crystal Palace (H)
- 21 Manchester City (A)
- 28 Swansea City (H)

DECEMBER
- 5 Newcastle United (A)
- 12 West Bromwich Albion (H)
- 19 Watford (A)
- 26 Leicester City (H)
- 28 Sunderland (A)

JANUARY
- 2 West Ham United (A)
- 12 Arsenal (H)
- 16 Manchester United (H)
- 23 Norwich City (A)

FEBRUARY
- 2 Leicester City (A)
- 6 Sunderland (H)
- 13 Aston Villa (A)
- 27 Everton (H)

MARCH
- 1 Manchester City (H)
- 5 Crystal Palace (A)
- 12 Chelsea (H)
- 19 Southampton (A)

APRIL
- 2 Tottenham Hotspur (H)
- 9 Stoke City (H)
- 16 Bournemouth (A)
- 23 Newcastle United (H)
- 30 Swansea City (A)

MAY
- 7 Watford (H)
- 15 West Bromwich Albion (A)





Foundation

Liverpool FC Foundation is the official charity of Liverpool Football Club. We deliver a range of initiatives that inspire people from all walks of life to make positive change happen for themselves and their communities. Follow us on Twitter @LFCFoundation.

Game on!

Reds legends to face old adversaries in capital of Sweden

Liverpool Football Club is pleased to announce its second Official Liverpool FC Legends match, against Manchester United Legends, which will take place at the Friends Arena in Stockholm on Thursday 3 September 2015. The first Legends match, v Real Madrid Legends, took place at the Bernabeu in the Spanish capital on Sunday 14 June 2015.

"The match gives us a chance to raise awareness of the work we do"

LFC Legends confirmed to play in the official team against United include: Robbie Fowler, Luis Garcia, Bjorn Tore Kvarne, Patrick Berger, Vladimir Smicer, Stephane Henchoz and Jerzy Dudek. The game will take place in support of Liverpool FC Foundation and Manchester United Foundation.

Andrea Cooper, head of Liverpool FC Foundation, said: "LFC is delighted to be announcing this second Legends match against Manchester United. It gives the Liverpool FC Foundation a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness of the full scope and value of the work that we do and the opportunity to engage with more people to extend our initiatives."

The match will be broadcast live on LFCTV and LFCTV GO. Tickets are available at www.friendsarena.se.


The Friends Arena


Luis Garcia plays for the LFC Legends

Different leagues

The Liverpool FC Foundation Football College has been invited to participate in the prestigious Premier League/Football League U19 Development League for the 2015/16 season.

Specifically designed for youth development, the League gives Foundation College youngsters the chance to showcase their talents at the likes of Tottenham's Enfield and Chelsea's Cobham training grounds. Carl Macauley, head of coaching and technical development at the college, says: "This is fantastic news for the youngsters of our city who have yet to make a breakthrough in the game. There are plenty of late developers and released players who have not had the chance to find a professional or semi-professional club, but competing in this league provides them with a real opportunity to achieve this."


L.F.C.
Official Picture Store
Liverpool FC
lfcpicturestore.tv




LIVERPOOL FC
ANFIELD



Liverpool FC Foundation is the official charity of Liverpool Football Club. We deliver a range of initiatives that inspire people from all walks of life to make positive change happen for themselves and their communities. Follow us on Twitter @LFCFoundation.

End of term report

Liverpool ace Mamadou drops by local school All Saints at the end of an eventful season



Mamadou with the school pupils

Mamadou Sakho recently made his final visit of 2014/15 to All Saints Primary School in Anfield.

As part of his ambassadorial role with the club's charity, Liverpool FC Foundation, the centre-half took part in two French lessons with year-four pupils. He joined in with translation puzzles and games and led a fun singing session with the youngsters in French.

LFCTV also filmed a special Kop Kids episode at the school with pupils quizzing Mamadou about his life, career, interests and Liverpool. He's actively involved in assisting Foundation community coaches who deliver weekly football sessions as part of their intensive 'On the Ball' Programme, as well as helping pupils with their French Language studies.

"I've really enjoyed visiting the pupils and staff at the school this season"

"I have really enjoyed visiting the pupils and staff at All Saints Primary School this season and helping out where possible," said Mamadou. "It's very rewarding for me to get to know the pupils and the school well and use my skills and knowledge in such a positive way."

Andrea Cooper, Head of Liverpool FC Foundation, added: "Mamadou Sakho's involvement has such a big influence on the youngsters and we are delighted to have his continued support as an Ambassador for the Foundation."

Get your Kicks

The Liverpool FC Foundation joined 46 other Premier League and Football League clubs in this year's Premier League Kicks Cup held in Liverpool.

Over 70 teams competed at The Jeffery Humble Playing Fields in Fazakerley. West Ham were crowned winners in the mixed competition while Newcastle United won the girls event. The tournament marked the opening of the new clubhouse at The Jeffery Humble Playing Fields following £650,000-worth of investment from the Premier League and The FA Facilities Fund, delivered by the Football Foundation.



NO... NO...
ANGELES GALAXY
GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA
IN GOD WE TRUST




Barry with wife Katy

OUR (OTHER) MAN IN L.A.

Steven Gerrard isn't only local lad to swap Liverpool for Los Angeles

Leaving Liverpool is often a difficult decision. Just ask Steven Gerrard, who left for LA with a heavy heart. One man that knows the feeling is actor Barry Sloane. He grew up on Merseyside before moving Stateside to film the hit international TV show *Revenge*.

He'd begun his career working on locally-produced shows such as *Brookside* and *Hollyoaks*, and grown up a big Red. "My dad and uncles were already Liverpool fans and had been going to the match for years," he explains. "I was born in 1981 and from 1986 onwards I was very aware of watching the games. I remember very much being indoctrinated early!

"I went to Anfield when I was about nine and we were playing Sheffield Wednesday. I seem to remember being in the Anfield Road stand and it was hectic. Then I was in the Kop the same season and it was mildly terrifying but the most exciting experience of my life as well. I loved it. You know when you first walk into the ground it just blows you away, doesn't it? You'll never lose that feeling."

After a number of TV roles and stints in the West End and Broadway, Barry joined the cast of *Revenge*, starring as Aiden Mathis. This meant he had to leave the city he'd grown up with. He currently resides in Los Angeles with his wife Katy and young daughter. Being a Liverpool fan in America brings about its own challenges. "I was getting up at three in the morning to get down the pub for kick-off. There's a pub in Santa Monica which opens up early especially for big games. There's usually a good mixture of fans – obviously Liverpool and, I hate to say it, United have equal support out here. There are some Evertonians as well, my wife included. We have enough of us to make a good noise in there."

The 34-year-old also has his thoughts on Gerrard's move to LA, having attended Galaxy games prior to the signing of the Liverpool legend. "He's going to look extraordinary on that pitch. The most important thing for the Galaxy is that he's going to drive them. He's going to propel them in the same way that David Beckham did."

Sloane's new show *The Whispers* is due to premiere in the US in June and sees him taking on an entirely new role. "It's based on a Ray Bradbury science-fiction story from the 50s about children being spoken to by an imaginary friend. It's a bit dark. I'm playing a high-ranking member of the Department of Defence trying to work out what it is. It's really original."

Years of hard work have brought Barry to this point in his career. Although he misses Liverpool and the buzz of the city on matchdays, it would appear that he'll be waking up early for LFC games for a while yet. That is, of course, when he's not watching Stevie playing for LA Galaxy.



Words: Seán Atkinson

GOT WITH THE PROGRAMME?

You can still own a copy of the sell-out special matchday edition for Steven Gerrard's farewell

Issue no29 of the official Liverpool FC matchday programme for season 2014/15 was a little different to its predecessors – not least in its title.

Instead of the familiar and traditional *This Is Anfield* masthead, the programme for the Premier League fixture with Crystal Palace on Saturday 16 May 2015 was renamed in honour of the departing Reds skipper – and it proved a massive hit.

Demand for the souvenir edition was huge at the stadium, in club stores, in the city and online, and copies are still available via the club's publishing partner ProgrammeMaster.

Inside the issue Steven reflects on his greatest moments in red

Inside the collector's item, Steven reflects on his greatest moments with a Liver Bird upon his chest. He talks about the coaches, managers, team-mates and games that have shaped him but reveals: "For me, it is all about Anfield."

There is also one of the first interviews that Steven gave to the matchday programme and a message from former Sheffield Wednesday goalkeeper Kevin Pressman, the man beaten by the first of Gerrard's 186 goals for the Reds.

Brendan Rodgers pays tribute to the captain in his manager's notes and Ladies star Fara Williams, England's most-capped player, also hails his incredible career. Broadcaster and author John Keith debates who is Liverpool's all-time greatest player – Gerrard, Dalglish or Liddell – while ex-defender Gary Gillespie salutes the ultimate professional.

To order your copy, please visit programmemaster.com where you can also purchase the Steven Gerrard Legend magazine.



POSTCARDS FROM L4

Catching up with the local illustrator and fan whose art has captured the imagination of Reds everywhere

Dave, what was last season like for you and your work?

Personally and professionally, a rollercoaster. After the team's great form in the 2013/14 season and the success of my postcard series, it was a no-brainer to do it again for 14/15. But it soon became obvious that it would be a different kind of season. Even though die-hard supporters still collected every postcard, it encouraged me to look at other ideas.

The Istanbul 10-year anniversary was coming up and I loved the idea of recreating a series as if it was happening in real-time. Then Steven Gerrard revealed he'd be leaving and I knew I needed to create something to celebrate his career. Both postcard sets were fun to work on.

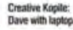
What guide of time-scale applies – from initial idea to the actual product in your hands?

It depends on the size of the project. For example, the Istanbul Collection contains 14 postcards: seven based on games played en route to the final, then seven based on incidents from the final itself. With it being 10 years ago, a lot of the match details can be easily forgotten, so there was about two weeks' worth of research involving DVDs, YouTube, match reports, stats from websites, then trying to capture the memories from each game. The design of the set took a month.

The Steven Gerrard set involved a period of research where I tried to narrow down a 17-year career into eight defining moments, which was not easy. Most of my time is spent getting happy with a style and a layout: once that's locked in, the actual drawing part happens fairly quickly.

What kind of interest have you had from fans around the world?

It's incredible and quite surreal thinking there are places on the other side of the world that my work has managed to reach. I've sold postcards to over 40 countries, including Hong Kong, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand, Brazil, India, Japan, Indonesia, Russia, South Africa and the Solomon Islands. Outside of the UK, I've sold a lot of postcards to US fans, closely followed by Hong Kong.



Creative Kopite: Dave with laptop



How did the poster for the Liverpool All-Star Charity Match come about?

As a fan I was excited to see all those ex-players together again on the Anfield pitch, and it seemed like a good opportunity to raise money for the Liverpool FC Foundation which does an incredible job. I wanted to get involved in any way I could to help promote the event and raise awareness of the charities. I knew a couple of people who worked at the Foundation so I dropped them a line, and the poster was a result of that.

How long have you been collaborating with the club now?

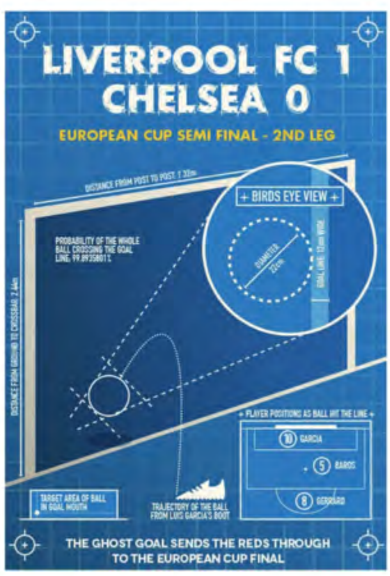
We started working together during the 2013/14 season, to produce officially licensed work. You see a lot of football art online and a good portion is created by fans but without the permission of clubs, so it's great to work with the full backing of the club to produce stuff that fans hopefully enjoy.

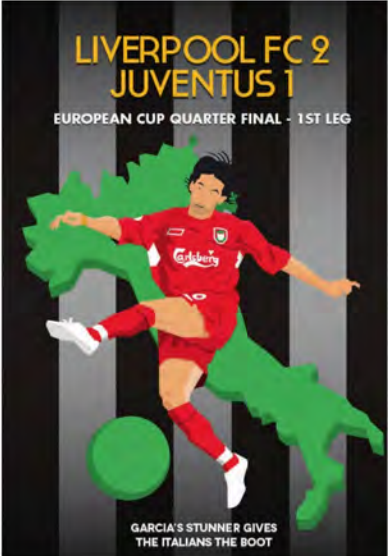
Where else has your work been featured, and in what way?

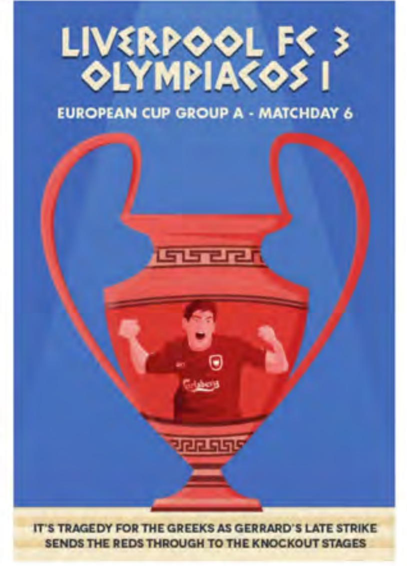
I've just finished a project for BT Sport that was used to promote the FA Cup final, which was a lot of fun. It started before the semi-final, so I was really hoping LFC would feature in the final but it wasn't to be. I've also worked with Carlsberg, deCoubertin book publishers and [whisper it!] Everton FC. And I got the opportunity to illustrate some work for a new football management game called Title Challenge. Over the next few months, if everything goes to plan my work will hopefully pop up in hotels and football stadiums as well as in print and online. I'm also starting to make plans for future postcard sets.

You can follow Dave on Twitter @davewi11 and purchase his work at davewill.bigcartel.com.


LIVERPOOL FC 3
LEVERKUSEN 1
EUROPEAN CUP LAST 16 - 1ST LEG
DIDI DISPATCHES THE GERMANS AS LIVERPOOL FC
GO IN TO THE SECOND LEG WITH A 2 GOAL LEAD


LIVERPOOL FC 1
CHELSEA 0
EUROPEAN CUP SEMI FINAL - 2ND LEG
+ BIRDS EYE VIEW +
TARGET AREA OF BALL IN GOAL MOUTH
TRAJECTORY OF THE BALL FROM LUIS GARCIA'S BOOT
+ PLAYER POSITIONS AS BALL HIT THE LINE +
10 GARCIA
5 BAROS
8 GERRARD
THE GHOST GOAL SENDS THE REDS THROUGH
TO THE EUROPEAN CUP FINAL


LIVERPOOL FC 2
JUVENTUS 1
EUROPEAN CUP QUARTER FINAL - 1ST LEG
GARCIA'S STUNNER GIVES
THE ITALIANS THE BOOT


LIVERPOOL FC 3
OLYMPIACOS 1
EUROPEAN CUP GROUP A - MATCHDAY 6
IT'S TRAGEDY FOR THE GREEKS AS GERRARD'S LATE STRIKE
SENDS THE REDS THROUGH TO THE KNOCKOUT STAGES



A ball for a hat-trick hero signed by Torres



A signed Barca shirt from Luis



England centurion: the special medal that says it all

EXHIBITION STUFF

The departing skipper has loaned an extra-special gift to the club's award-winning museum

Steven Gerrard has loaned his incredible collection of shirts, medals and other memorabilia to The Liverpool FC Story museum. The collection was acquired over almost 20 years of magnificent service to LFC and is regarded as one of the finest in the world of football.

Having captained Liverpool FC for more than a decade, Steven made over 700 appearances and scored nearly 200 goals from midfield. He won almost everything there was to win, collecting FA Cup, League Cup, UEFA Cup and UEFA Super Cups in 2001 as well as the Charity Shield. Other League Cups were secured in 2003 and 2012.

His finest moments were in the Champions League and FA Cup finals of 2005 and 2006 respectively when his performances and goals inspired Liverpool to improbable victories. Steven's contribution towards 17 Premier League campaigns was marked by numerous goals against great rivals, with 10 against Everton and nine v Manchester United.

With work progressing rapidly on the new Main Stand, this summer is a great time to see the Steven Gerrard Collection and experience the unique history of Liverpool FC and its home


A Liver Bird to commemorate his 600th Reds game in 2012

for over 120 years, Anfield. The club's award-winning stadium tour offers exclusive access – from the dressing-rooms and players' tunnel with its world-famous *This Is Anfield* sign to the dugouts, Spion Kop, press room and museum – with passionate tour guides taking guests behind the scenes and fascinating insights into the club's celebrated past and bright future.

LFC's open-top City Explorer Bus tour provides a direct return route from the city-centre to the stadium, with lots of spectacular views and insight into LFC's history along the way.

To find out more, please visit **www.liverpoolfc.com/tours.**

Visitors can see the collection and enjoy the unique history of LFC as well



Shirts from Italian legends Alessandro Del Piero and Paolo Maldini

Last-ever appearance for his country

Istanbul jersey, winner's medal and skipper's armband

Footballer writers' player of the year award, 2009



UEFA Cup medal, 2001



PFA young player of
the year trophy, 2001



My favourite Gerrard moment

FRENCH CONNECTION 16.09.08

The magazine's editorial team pays tribute to departing skipper Steven Gerrard with writer Simon Hughes recalling some Champions League gold...

Many of Steven Gerrard's best moments in a Liverpool shirt were underpinned by displays of force.

He was off the pitch as he appeared on it. In an interview, among a multitude of forceful and revealing answers, he once took me through the intricacies of his passing technique.

It was his intention to deliver every pass a yard or two in front of his team-mate – helping build a relentless forward motion. He passed it forcefully too – making it more difficult for the opponent to intercept, while also respecting the recipient's first touch to meet the expected standard of a Liverpool player.

He approached captaincy leading by example. He raced into tackles, cracked free-kicks, whipped crosses and released ferocious shots. When all was lost, he was there, rescuing Liverpool. He was the closest thing to a real Roy Race.

Yet there were other moments, other types of goals, indeed: those that were delicate and accurate, those that were, nevertheless, impossibly executed.

One came against Olympique Marseille in 2008. I was not in the Stade Velodrome. I was not in France. I was at home, in my living room, watching the game with my dad. It was not ideal. But not being there had advantages: being able to rewind it dozens of times, each replay making the goal seem superior to the last.

Marseille were leading. I can't remember a thing about their opener and only through research do I know Lorik Cana scored it, Cana being an Albanian midfielder who later captained Sunderland.

Despite being behind, Liverpool were dominating possession. It was enough for the crowd to start whistling.

What happened next was relatively simple: there was space, a drive through midfield by Fernando Torres,

"Marseille keeper Mandanda stood like a cowboy without a gun"

















a pass to the right and a heavy touch by Dirk Kuyt, who was trying to find Gerrard.

Then came the undisputed brilliance: the ball was slightly behind Gerrard, yet he somehow positioned his body in a way that enabled him to shoot. I remember thinking it would end up in the main stand if he got it wrong, or maybe the Mediterranean.

Suddenly, the noise dimmed. There was an anticipation that something was about to happen. As the leather of boot met leather of ball, the stadium appeared to fall completely silent.

Gerrard popped the shot off with his right foot. It rose. It curled wickedly to the left. It dipped over the goalkeeper, Steve Mandanda – a France international, who must have been deceived by the ridiculous trajectory. He stood there motionless, like a cowboy without a gun, knowing he was beaten. And he was. It was pointless attempting to prevent the inevitable.

Gerrard, meanwhile, trotted away like he does things like this every day in training. He probably did.
And Liverpool won 2-1 – Gerrard thumping home the result-clinching penalty-kick six minutes later.

HOT STUFF

The good weather is here – and this is just a sample of the summer fashion exclusive to Liverpool FC

1 Mens Red Mari Zip-Thru Hoody (A4279) £35



2 Mens Cravern Tee (A5527) £20



3 Mens LFC Tee (A3473) £15



4 Mens Moss Swim Shorts (A5420) £25





5 Girls Frill Sleeve Tee (A5325) £15



6 Ladies Riverside Floral Applique Tee (A5469) £25



7 Boys Layered Tee (A5080) £10



8 Ladies Preston Jacket (A5574) £45

Shop Liverpool FC's Summer Fashion Essentials in all Official Club Stores and the Official Online Store at store.liverpoolfc.com. For more details follow @LFCRetail on Twitter and Instagram.

Asisat Oshoala Instagram

@superzeee



9 June
Alhamdulilah for my Goal today #100%ALLAH



9 June
Thank You on behalf of the #SUPERFALCONS



3 June
⁇⁇⁇ #BFF



28 May
Team-mates!



26 May
Thank you all for making this mine. I'm proud to be a Nigerian, proud to be a red #ProudlyNaija #lfcfamily



16 May
#peace #selfie



7 May
Naija all the way....... #representing #photoshoot



30 April
God bless this artist 😘😘😘 @kelionarts



27 April
That smile is priceless 😀😀😀...... someone please tell me to close my teeth 🙈🙈🙈🙈🙈



26 April
Super proud of my girls... Great win for us. Alhamdulilah for my goal and assist. #YaAllah



23 April
Give your absence to those who don't appreciate your presence #shikena @pharrell



21 April
Sunshine!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

David PRICE

Different coaches can offer a fresh approach on and off the training field



Shanks and his staff

Next season will see Liverpool's coaching staff have something of an overhaul following the departures of Colin Pascoe and Mike Marsh.

I have had a number of different coaches throughout my career and I know from experience that it can be good to take on new ideas and hear a different voice from time to time. I've read books on this subject and the conclusions seem to be that the best leaders in life have the best assistants and advisers around them. Strong leaders are never afraid to have people around them who may be more experienced in certain areas and that comes down to ego.

If you've got a big ego you are unwilling to listen to anyone elses's ideas – it's your way or the highway – but I think the best leaders have had the humility to have people with them who can look at things from a different angle.

When you look back throughout footballing history, that's often the case. At this football club, of course, there is the classic example of Bill Shankly and his team in the legendary Anfield Boot Room.

We have to remember that Brendan Rodgers is still young and relatively inexperienced at Premier League level so working with different people may help him too. It can also be healthy to have differences of opinion from time to time. A perfect example was when Tommy Brooks came over to work with me last year. He has trained the best fighters in the history of boxing: Evander Holyfield, Mike Tyson and Wladimir Klitschko. But his training methods weren't exactly suited to me and it got to a point where I had to speak up for myself because everyone responds in different ways. In the end, I felt I had to say something and we altered things.

The new members of Brendan's backroom team will be working with James Milner and Danny Ings and I think both are good additions for the club. I've always been a fan of Milner. He's a hardworking, solid player. I remember watching him a few years ago at Anfield when he played for Aston Villa. I don't usually take too much notice of opposition players because I tend to be focused on our team. But he stood out that day with his touch and ability to whip in a cross. Other teams were clearly interested and he could have also stayed at Manchester City, so I think he's a great signing for us and a steal on a free transfer.

Being honest, I haven't seen as much of Ings but he scored 11 goals for Burnley last season and that is a good return in a relegated team, Hopefully with better service he will be even more prolific. He's young and English, so what's to lose by bringing him in to be a part of the squad? He's got everything to gain.

It's also important to be bringing them in early, so they can get used to things and be part of the full pre-season. Geographically it's not a big move for either of them and they won't have to uproot their families so that's another part of the battle dealt with.

As for myself, I picked up a minor neck injury during training which put me out of sparring for a couple of weeks and so we have had to readjust my schedule. But it's not all doom and gloom. Although we've had to come off the Liverpool bill on 26 June, we have taken up another option to go and fight for the European title in Stuttgart on 17 July instead. Overall it might work out better because I'm confident of bringing the belt back and that will give me something to show for my time away. It would be a big title to win and also push me up the rankings, so hopefully Liverpool can have another champion of Europe 10 years after Istanbul!

Follow David on Twitter @DavidPrice_1

"The best leaders work with people who look at things differently"